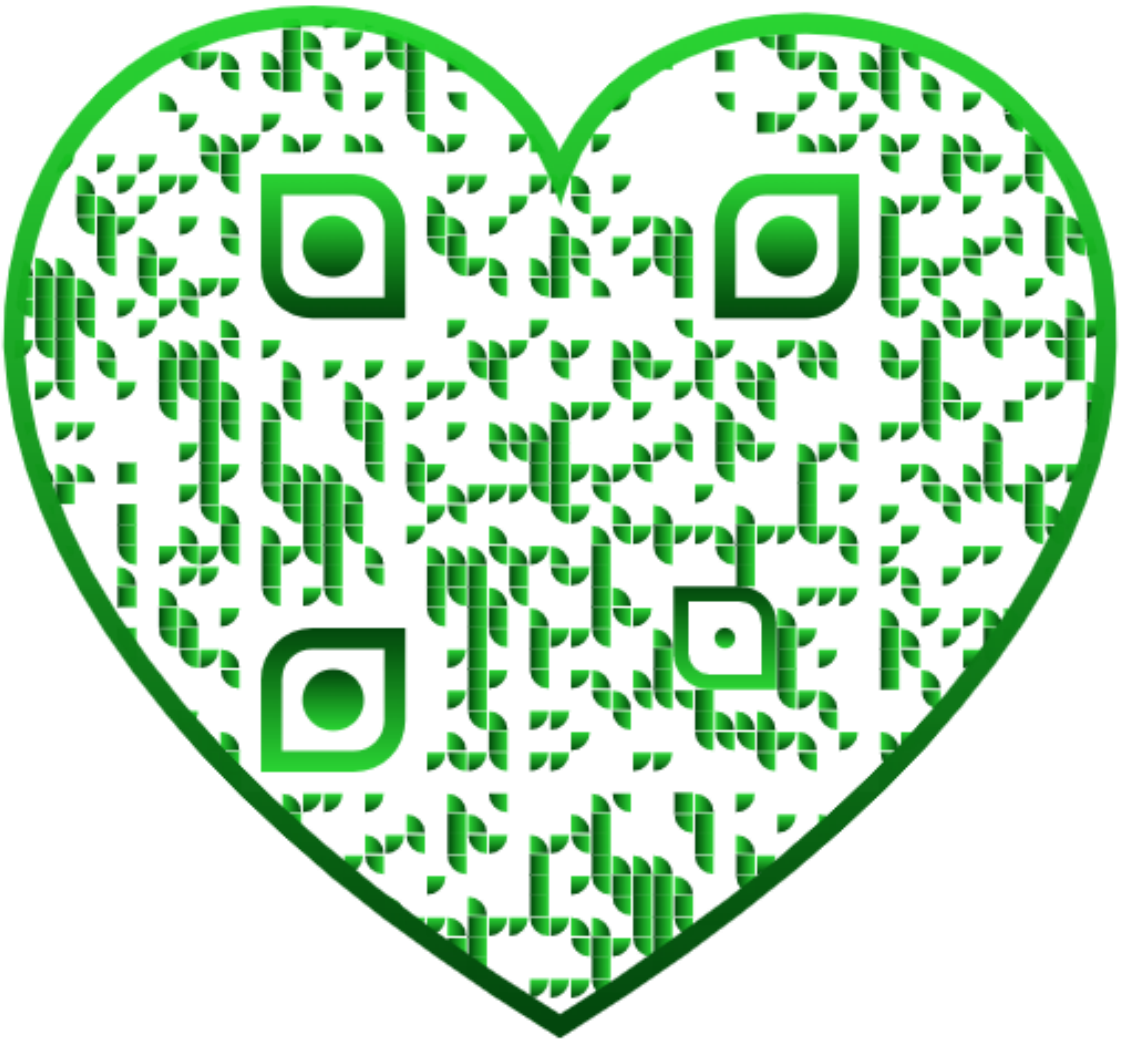
ANCIENT HAWAII

A CAPTIVATING GUIDE TO HAWAIIAN HUMAN HISTORY, STARTING FROM THE POLYNESIAN ARRIVAL THROUGH THE GROWTH OF A CIVILIZATION TO KAMEHAMEHA THE GREAT

CAPTIVATING HISTORY



Ancient Hawaii

A Captivating Guide to Hawaiian Human History, Starting from the Polynesian Arrival through the Growth of a Civilization to Kamehameha the Great

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Introduction

Hawaii is hands-down one of the most beautiful and iconic places in the world. The archipelago of the Hawaiian Islands (also known as the Sandwich Islands) is known worldwide. With over 1.4 million people living in this natural paradise and an incredible 9.4 million tourists visiting from all over the world every year, Hawaii is a wonderland to many.

Hawaii is an archipelago consisting of over 137 islands, many of which are volcanic. Altogether, the islands span a great distance of over 1,500 miles. They are located in the heart of Oceania, and they are about two thousand miles off the western coast of the US mainland.

Although Hawaii consists of many islands, there are eight main islands that most people think of. These islands are Niʻihau, Kauaʻi, Oʻahu, Molokaʻi, Lānaʻi, Kahoʻolawe, Maui, and Hawaiʻi, with the latter also known as "Big Island" or more commonly "Hawaii Island." People who have never been to Hawaii typically think that the Big Island is the most visited island, but the truth is Oʻahu is the most visited one. (You might notice the okina in these words, which represents a glottal stop. We have decided to use the traditional spelling of the islands and rulers' names. When Hawaii is referred to in general, it will be spelled as "Hawaii.")

But this is modern-day Hawaii. You have heard about the white-sand beaches, the glorious year-round sunshine, and dominating mountain coastlines, as well as the spectacular natural wonders, stunning national parks, and awe-inspiring beauty stops. But what are the origins of such a prestigious country? What was the world of ancient Hawaii like?

Even saying the words "ancient Hawaii" sparks a certain curiosity in our minds, a spark that makes us want to dig down and see what lies below the surface. What were the people of ancient Hawaii like? What kind of culture, society, government, and religion existed here?

We are going to travel back to when the islands first started out. Read of the stories of Hawaii's rising kingdoms and falling dynasties, of gods past and present, and the perhaps inevitable transition into the modern world.

Within the following chapters, you will discover the deep and twisting story of ancient Hawaii. Experience Hawaii's trials and tribulations alongside its triumphs and tragedies. In many regards, this is Hawaii as you have never seen it before. So, sit back, relax, and dive into the captivating history of

these tropical islands.

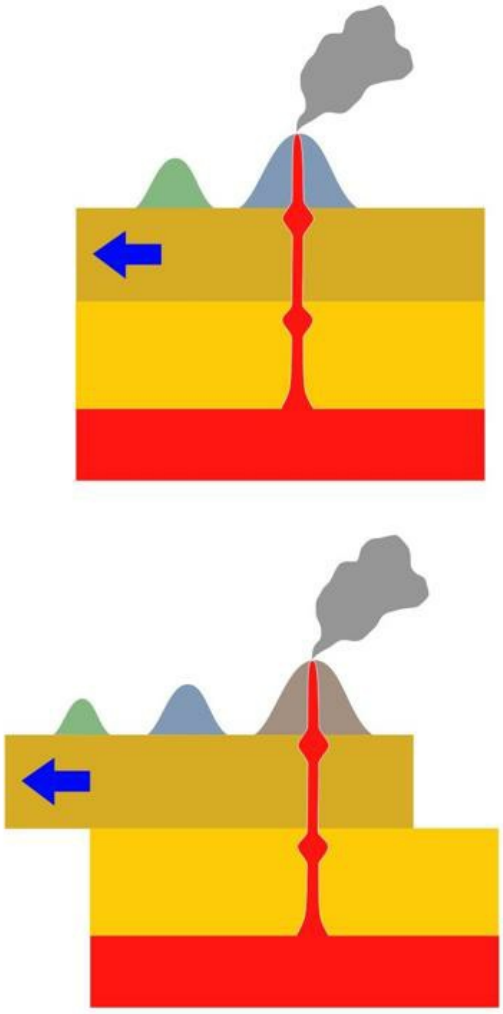
Chapter 1 – The Background of Hawaii

Before we hop into when the islands were first inhabited, it is worth taking a look at how Hawaii was formed. Many might know that the Hawaiian Islands are a group of volcanic islands. As the term “volcanic islands” suggests, these islands were created from volcanoes, and they began to be formed around forty to seventy million years ago.

Hawaii was created by hotspot volcanism. Typically, volcanoes are created by tectonic plates coming together. Hotspots, on the other hand, are in fixed spots.

To put it very simply, the islands were formed (and are still being formed) as the Pacific Plate slowly moved northwest over these fixed hot spots. The islands would pop up one after the other. In fact, there are a number of submerged mountains called seamounts in the Hawaiian archipelago.

Interestingly, the most northwestern islands are the oldest, and dating the land of the islands can show modern scientists the speed at which the Pacific Oceanic plate was moving all those years ago.



A simple diagram of how the plate moved over a hot spot and created land. (Credit: Los668; Wikimedia Commons)

Mauna Loa, the Earth's largest active volcano, can be found on the Big Island. It is one of these hotspot volcanoes. It makes up a little more than half of the island, and it stands at an impressive 13,678 feet above sea level, which makes it taller than Mount Everest! Small eruptions occur every few years, with the last significant one dating back to April 15th, 1984.

Other active volcanoes include Kīlauea and Lōʻihi. While Kīlauea is above ground, Lōʻihi is an underwater volcano. Lōʻihi is the newest volcano in the Hawaiian region, and it will eventually rise above sea level. However, that will not happen for another 10,000 to 100,000 years! This means that the Hawaiian Islands will continue to be formed for a long time. For example, Kīlauea has been erupting off and on since 1983. Since that year, it has added

around 700 acres of new land.

Hawaii's black-sand beaches are due to these volcanoes. When lava comes into contact with water, it cools. The sudden change in temperature causes the lava to shatter into sharp pieces. This means there is only so much black sand to go around, as the volcanoes are not constantly erupting. Hawaii has made it illegal to take black sand from its beaches because of this.

A photo of black sand forming. (Credit: Philip Maise; Wikimedia Commons)

These very volcanoes are also responsible for creating some of the most beautiful rainforests to be found anywhere in the world, as well as wetlands that provide homes for thousands of species, including endangered birds. Volcanic deposits are incredibly fertile and are overloaded with nutrients that plants thrive in, specifically magnesium, iron, and potassium. This makes Hawaii naturally fertile.

Although this is a very brief look at how Hawaii was formed, you have a clearer idea of what ancient Hawaii was like before any person had seen it. It was a fertile paradise just waiting to be discovered. And this ever-expanding chain of islands would soon become home to a whole new realm of life.

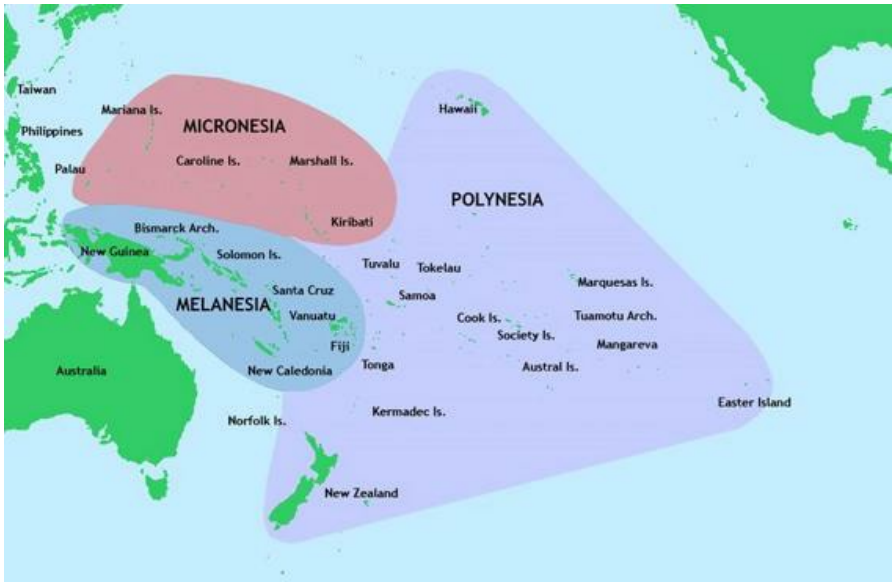
This process took millions of years, but we are going to fast forward through time to take a look at Polynesia.

An Introduction to Polynesia

Polynesia is a large group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. These islands were settled by Austronesian people, who we think came from Taiwan. So, when you hear the word Polynesians today, you should know that there are many

people groups that make it up. Since they are closely related and can trace their roots to the same place, they are bunched together under this one umbrella term. For instance, Polynesians include the Māori people of New Zealand, Tahitians, Samoans, and even Hawaiians.

Some might argue that Hawaii is not technically a part of Polynesia proper, although it was certainly settled by the Polynesians, which means they would fall under that grouping regardless. In the past, Hawaii was considered to be a part of the South Sea Islands. Today, most believe that Hawaii is a part of Polynesia since it falls into the Polynesian Triangle.



A map of the three major zones of Oceania. Note how Polynesia is shaped like a triangle. (Credit: Kahuroa; Wikimedia Commons)

Since the Polynesians spread from Southeast Asia into the Pacific, there is no central location for Polynesian history. The Austronesians began moving from Taiwan in 3000 BCE, but they only reached Polynesia around 900 BCE. They initially settled in Tonga and Samoa, and they would not explore more of Polynesia for nearly a thousand years. During that time, a cultural divide occurred between the people on the islands of Tonga and Samoa and those who lived in Fiji.

Although there were differences between the various Polynesian cultures, there were many similarities. For instance, their languages are related to each other. Today, there are thirty-eight Polynesian languages. They also share similar cultural traditions. The majority of them believed in polytheism and animism. Animism is the belief that deities or other supernatural powers lived within nature, such as animals, plants, and even handmade objects.

Expressing Through Art

It is important to note that the dates that have been mentioned are rough estimates since there was no writing system at the time. However, whereas writing how we know it today did not exist, the Polynesians are famed for using tattoos to record information and messages.

Polynesian tattoo art remains incredibly distinctive today. Back then (and in some cases today, especially when it comes to traditional tattooing), it contained a lot of information. Tattoos were used for a variety of purposes, such as telling important events of their life, expressing their status in society, honoring their ancestors, or safeguarding their health.

Polynesian tattoos usually consisted of curved lines, crosses, and circles. They were found on faces, hands, arms, legs, torsos, and other places on the body.

Although many Polynesian cultures use tattooing, we are going to focus on the Native Hawaiians here. They called the practice *kākau*. It was a very complicated process, and only experts (kahunas) could do it. It was a spiritual experience for everyone involved. According to a modern-day master of Hawaiian tattooing, Keliʻi, one has to learn how to use their left hand to tattoo since this was the hand that channeled “spiritual intent.”

The process is also incredibly painful. The pigment would be applied to the skin via a needle made from bone. This would be tied to a stick and then struck with a mallet. Essentially, the kahunas would tap the designs on the body. Typically, someone else would need to be there to help stretch the skin. These sessions would last three to five hours, and depending on the design, one might need to have multiple sessions. And if one could not endure the pain, they would leave with an incomplete tattoo. Everyone would know that person was cowardly with just one quick glance.

Some of the most popular designs were lizards, crescent fans, woven reeds, and other intricate patterns. Women could also get tattoos, although these were usually on their hands and wrists.

It should be emphasized that there were differences in both tattoos and the tattooing process among the Polynesian cultures. However, there would be some similarities, such as the fish hook design. If you were to travel to a new island and meet a new culture, you could usually tell who the leaders were, what someone’s role was, and what kind of experiences they had, all thanks to their tattoos.

Chapter 2 – Arrival of the Polynesians

When it comes to any kind of ancient history, it is always a challenge to know where to begin, but interestingly with Hawaii, it is rather simple.

Our journey starts back in the year 400 CE. Most historians agree that the history of Hawaii started around this year, although the habitation of the islands was a process that occurred over a few hundred years.

Hawaii Finds Its People

The Polynesians were incredible seamen and navigators. They could sail without instruments by reading the stars. But even without modern-day technology, they were able to find their way across thousands of miles of open ocean. Sometimes they explored the ocean for fun. Sometimes it was because they needed to expand. The Polynesians also went on long voyages to trade with other islands or tribes. And when they traveled, they brought chickens, pigs, dogs, noni fruit, and kava with them.

There is no doubt that the Polynesians were successful in what they did. Their island hopping was very much fueled by their knowledge about currents in open water, which allowed them to plan their course, calculate when the best time to leave for specific islands would be, and when to return home. They knew when certain winds would be favorable for their journey.

It is this skill that allowed them to reach Hawaii in the first place. But before they reached Hawaii, they made settlements along the way. The Polynesians might have felt the need to create new settlements due to overpopulation. If there were too many people on their home island, the resources would become too stretched. In addition, the Polynesian tribes were known to engage in conflict, both internally with one another and on an island-to-island basis. There is evidence that suggests less impactful tribes, either due to numbers, resources, or strategies, could have fled these conflicts and surrendered their territories in the process, thus taking to the oceans to hunt for new lands.

Some of these settlements were made on the Marquesas Islands. These islands are about 2,336 miles from Hawaii and less than 1,000 miles from Tahiti.

The Polynesians first came across these lands around 100 to 700 CE, although some contend that they arrived much earlier, perhaps as early as 340 BCE. It was the paradise they had hoped for. Although most islands in the

Pacific are fairly fertile, the Marquesas Islands were not. They were actually dry. This is because the islands are the first break for easterly winds, which causes droughts on the island.

Due to these droughts, there was a lack of vegetation and freshwater sources on the island, which caused massive problems for the settlers. Fortunately, due to their skills of being able to survive at sea for long periods of time, they could make a living, but it was certainly a struggle.

Historians believe the Polynesians who settled on the Marquesas Islands used them as a base while they explored the surrounding areas. They had much better prospects in other places, which is why the Marquesan lifestyle evolved much differently compared to that, for example, in Tahiti.

The lack of hygiene and malnutrition were issues that needed to be solved because they led to frequent miscarriages, which eventually made it impossible for the population to maintain itself at a stable level. It is believed that the Polynesians left the Marquesas Islands to find a place that was better suited for farming.

Historians today believe that the Polynesians sailed from the Marquesas Islands to the Hawaiian Islands around 400 CE. Some place the discovery of the islands to 300 CE, while others place it as late as 600 CE. This book will be using the general consensus of 400 CE. The reason scholars have a hard time pinpointing the exact date is due to the lack of a writing system. Although tattoos could record important events, these events would not come with dates. And stories that were passed down from generation to generation would not include precise years either.

How It Was All Made Possible

As stated above, the Polynesians were known for their skilled mariners and sailors, and their entire history is full of their feats of exploration and settling in foreign lands. So, it is not surprising that they were able to reach an archipelago as remote as Hawaii.

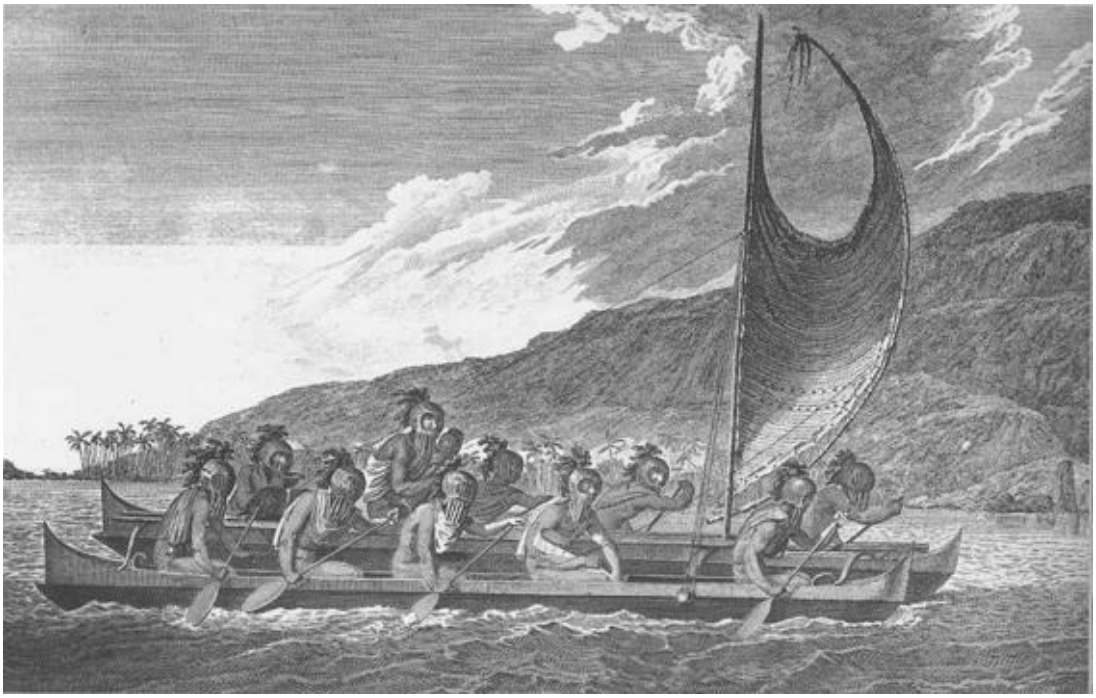
Polynesian canoes relied on the power of sails and paddles. They would use outrigger canoes, which could be simple dugout canoes or larger vessels. Typically, three or four boats would travel the oceans together to ensure mutual success. During the nights, they could stay in touch by blowing through a conch shell. It is clear just how advanced the Polynesians were, and it is easy to see why they were able to thrive.

Take a moment to imagine what this would have been like. You would have

been setting out from a tropical island that contained everything you had ever known, setting out into the waters that had kept you safe. What new opportunities were out there waiting? And what dangers lurked on the horizon?

The Magic of Polynesian Sailing

The Polynesians' sailing and navigation skills were truly astounding, especially when you consider how far they had to travel. It is certainly a worthwhile tangent to dive into.



A drawing of a small Polynesian sailing boat. Smaller vessels like this would typically be used for traveling between islands. Larger two-sailed boats were typically used for longer voyages. These larger vessels were capable of holding up to thirty to fifty people. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Evidence shows that the Polynesians were capable of reaching nearly every single island that can be found within the Polynesian Triangle; its three points are Hawaii, Easter Island, and New Zealand. This is why there are so many similarities in the cultures within this area.

But how did they do it?

Well, there is no single right answer since the Polynesians employed a variety of techniques. They studied the stars and followed the flight paths of birds. Simply put, the Polynesians were masters of their craft. Since there was no

writing or recording, all of these skills were passed down through verbal communication and experience.

Navigating the Stars

By far the most impressive way the Polynesians navigated was by tracking the locations of the stars in the sky, a technique that was optimized and perfected over thousands of years. Stars hold their celestial position all year round, but they rise at different times depending on the seasons. This means that every single star in the sky has a particular declination.

When you track this movement, whether it is a star rising or setting, you begin to track your geographic location in relation to certain stars. To many readers living in the modern age, passing down knowledge like this without being able to write it down might seem incredible. But to the Polynesians, it was second nature.

The Polynesians would set off into the waters and head toward a star that sat near the horizon. Once their chosen star rose too high, they would switch to a lower one. It was almost like solving a dot-to-dot puzzle in the sky, as there was a route of stars you had to follow if you wanted to travel to a certain place.

Equally as incredible, the Polynesians would also measure the elevation of stars, which allowed them to determine their own latitude. Therefore, they were able to locate and navigate themselves to islands that they already knew the locations of. If you wanted to travel to an island, you would basically sail along with the latitude measurement until you got there, using the star routes to help you navigate.

If you couple this with the rest of the techniques the Polynesians used, you can understand how the Polynesians did what seems impossible. With these navigational tools at hand, they would have had a relatively solid format for finding their way around the ocean.

The Swells of the Ocean

Another essential navigational trick the Polynesians had up their sleeves was identifying and tracking the swells of the oceans. These are waves not caused by nearby winds; rather, they are the result of wind from distant low-pressure systems.

There is an endless number of habitable islands within the Polynesian Triangle, and there are chains of islands that are thousands of miles long. This means that the ocean currents are fairly easy to predict along an island

chain.

Say you were a Polynesian trying to travel to an island. You could travel to a few islands you knew and meet up with other tribes and communities who lived there. You could ask them about the swells and currents in that local area, which would help you get to the next island. And from there, the process would continue until you found the place you wanted.

Even if you found yourself in an unfamiliar area, you could simply identify the swells and currents you had experienced before. Since you would be in the same part of the world, they would be fairly similar. When you factor in wind directions and star navigation, you can see how the Polynesians were able to become fairly accurate in finding their way around and being able to discover new places.

Following the Birds

The most powerful navigational method the Polynesians had was watching the flight patterns of birds. The Pacific Ocean is home to many bird migration routes, and the Polynesians would have naturally become familiar with them. Understanding and noting the patterns of these birds was, therefore, a great way of figuring out where you were and where you were going.

The Polynesians used different types of birds to navigate the Pacific. Some of these birds include the white tern, Pacific long-tailed cuckoo, Pacific golden plover, noddy tern, and the bristle-thighed curlew.

Navigators would follow the migrations of these birds. For example, it was known that the white tern would fly out from its island home to hunt for food early in the mornings in the open ocean and then go back to land at night. If you set sail in the morning and were looking to find land, you could just sail in the reverse direction from where the white birds were flying.

Of course, nesting seasons would alter this pattern slightly, but that was all knowledge that the Polynesians built up over the years and could use to their advantage. This way of navigating was so successful that it was taught to US soldiers during World War II as a way of finding land if they found themselves on a shipwrecked boat or lost in the air.

What is more, it is believed that many Polynesians would take a shore-sighted bird with them on their boats. These were birds who supposedly refused to land on the water. For instance, the frigatebird would not land in water since their feathers would get too wet to fly. If navigators thought they were getting close to shore, they would release the frigatebird. If the sailors

were not close to land, the bird would just fly back to the boat. However, if they were close to land, the bird would fly to the shore, and the Polynesians would follow it.

This was just one of the skills that set the Polynesians up for success and allowed them to span all over this area of the world. Naturally, for exploration and discovery, as well as for reasons like warfare and a lack of resources, the Polynesians set out to find what new places they could find.

Discovering a New Home

And so, with all this information on how the Polynesians lived and navigated the seas, it comes as no surprise that they were able to make it to the island of Hawaii after migrating over the centuries across the Pacific Ocean.

And during these centuries, the Polynesian explorers were able to collect a vast number of resources to help them with their efforts, such as a variety of plants. They also had seeds for banana plants, breadfruit, and taro, just to name a few plants they ate. In addition, they brought along livestock, such as pigs, dogs, and chickens. Some of these were brought from their initial home, but they collected some of these as they hopped from island to island in search of a new home.

And eventually, they found that home in the Hawaiian Islands.

The first settlers of Hawaii landed in Ka Lae, which is the southernmost tip of what is today known as the main island of Hawai‘i. This is the largest and most southerly island in the archipelago.

It was during this time that Hawai‘i was given its name. Hawai‘i comes from the Polynesian word *Hawaiki* (the w is pronounced as a v), which means “homeland.” The preferred pronunciation of Hawai‘i today is “huh-wah-ee” or “huh-vai-ee.” There is discussion over whether Hawaii should be pronounced with a “w” or a “v,” with most Native Hawaiians tending to use the “v” pronunciation. On top of this, the glottal stop is often ignored by tourists. The glottal stop is similar to the pause in “uh-oh.” Chances are that no one will look at you twice if you pronounce it without the glottal stop, though.

Some Native Hawaiians contend that people had been living on the islands by the time the Polynesians arrived. They were pushed inland when the Polynesians arrived. The people who support this theory point to Hawaiian mythology, which mentions the Menehune, a race of dwarfs. They built temples and fish ponds, which were both things the arriving Polynesians

continued to build. However, it seems more likely that the Polynesians were the first settlers of the islands.

The Polynesians had a few difficult first years, but eventually, they settled and survived long enough to see their land prosper into something beautiful. Since they were highly skilled farmers and fishermen, they were able to thrive.

Due to how successful the Polynesians were, it was not long before they spread out and populated the other major Hawaiian Islands. Now, remember this was all happening around 400 to 1000 CE. This means it is hard to know exactly what kind of lifestyle the people had in terms of what their customs were and how they actually lived on a day-to-day basis. After all, the Polynesians did not write down what occurred to them, and the artifacts we have access to are limited in what they tell us.

However, based on the evidence that has been uncovered, we know that the Polynesians were the sole inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands for nearly six hundred years. Around 1000 CE (although some place this date earlier), the Tahitians arrived and discovered this tropical wonderland for themselves, thus joining the existing population.

The Hawaiian civilization was born.

Chapter 3 – The World of Pre-Contact Hawaii

Between the years of 1000 and 1778 CE, Hawaii was pretty much untouched and relatively unknown by most of the world. This is the period we label as ancient Hawaii. This was a time when the tribes and communities lived off the land. Although they had their own issues, as every civilization does, the issues Native Hawaiians had to face tended to be a little different than the seemingly progressive and often turbulent ones that affected other populations around the world.

In 1778, explorer Captain James Cook would arrive on the islands and began the process of connecting the archipelago with the rest of the world. But what were the islands like for those nearly eight hundred years?

After the islands were discovered, the Polynesians inhabited them. It has been suggested that they arrived in two waves. The first came from the Marquesas Islands in the south around 400 CE, whereas the second wave came from Tahiti, likely around the 9th or 10th century. Over the years, these populations grew, with the islands of Hawaii accommodating an incredible 300,000 people before the arrival of Cook himself. (It should be noted that the actual number of Hawaiian residents is unknown. The conservative estimates go as low as 100,000, while the higher estimates go to nearly a million.)

Ancient Hawaiians were lightly brown-skinned people, and they typically had black hair that was either straight or wavy. These people were also on the larger side, similar to the Māori people from New Zealand. The ancient Hawaiians were broad and tall but also athletic, lean, and muscular.

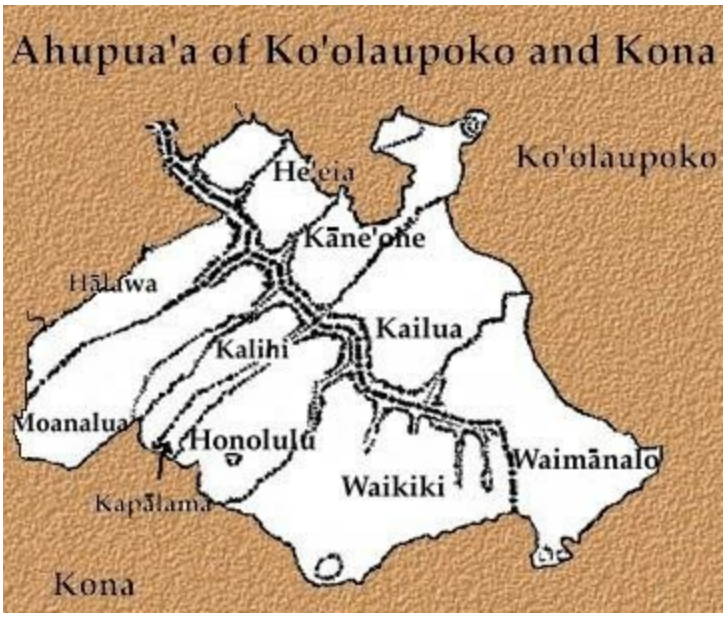
Most of the cultural traits that these societies followed were similar to other Polynesian tribes and cultures at the time. For example, a ruling class or a ruling royal family led the tribes and made the decisions. The supreme ruler of each generation was known as the *ali‘i nui*. The word *ali‘i* (the noble class) is a familiar word in other Polynesian languages, but in the Māori language, this concept would be known as *ariki*.

These ruling classes typically engaged in inbreeding to keep the bloodline pure. Many of the male leaders, who were known as chiefs, would practice polygyny, which means they had more than one wife. As we will explore later, most of the kings in the monarchy had multiple wives. One ruler might have had as many as thirty wives!

How the Society Viewed Land

Since this was an island society, there is no doubt that land was one of the most important and valuable commodities in Hawaii. It was the main contributing factor when it came to distinguishing wealth amongst the people, much as it is today. Land ownership defined boundaries and detailed how authority and leadership would be doled out.

For a clear idea of how this worked, you would have to take the whole of Hawaii and divide it up into "sections of pie," as many sources describe it.



The "sections of pie" would ultimately look a little something like this.

These land divisions were known as *moku*, with the island itself being called *mokupuni*. Each *moku* went from the very tip of the mountaintops to the shorelines of the ocean. The *moku* would be further divided into *ahupua'a*, and these would be divided into even smaller sections called *'ili*.

This system of division was what made the Hawaiian societies successful. They were self-contained, but they were also sustainable. The people were capable of living amongst themselves and working alongside communities in neighboring divisions.

Those who lived in the mountains specialized in growing food on nutritious and fertilized land while making tools and using the forests for resources.

Volcanic activity is one of the reasons that Hawaii is known as an epicenter of biodiversity. Recent research has found that volcanic eruptions actually create a type of soil that is incredibly favorable for plant life.

According to a study published recently in *Science*, lava from the Kīlauea and Mauna Loa volcanoes has played a key role in the development of the island

of Hawai‘i’s rich coastal ecosystems. Over time, as lava flows into the ocean, it cools and breaks down into various minerals, such as calcium, iron, potassium, and phosphorus, which are necessary for plant life to thrive. These minerals mix with organic debris and bacteria and become a “volcanic smorgasbord” for the native plants and animals of Hawai‘i, although this phenomenon affected the other islands as well.

As lava cools and interacts with seawater, it also forms clay that is resistant to heat, allowing for plant life to continue growing even after the eruptions cease. This consistent source of fresh nutrients allows land that would otherwise be desert and infertile to be teeming with life.

“The whole chemistry of the soils changes when you have lava flowing over them,” said the study’s co-author Dave Karl, a geochemist at the University of Hawaii’s School of Ocean and Earth Science Technology. “It has an immediate effect that declines over time, but the lasting legacy of lava flowing over the landscape is that it creates extremely good growing conditions.”

While the ancient Hawaiians would not have known the science behind this, they would have indeed reaped the benefits. Thus, they were able to create a thriving society with plenty of resources to go around.

And the way the islands ran was fairly well-organized. Those who worked on the land and up in the mountains traded with those who lived on the coastlines. Of course, people who called the coastlines home were experts at fishing and rearing animals. This knowledge would be passed down through the generations from their ancestors, who we, of course, know to be masters of the sea. This partnership ensured that every islander had access to things they wanted or needed.

It is important to note that these earlier divisions still impact Hawaiian society today. Many of the *ahupua‘a* are officially recognized by law today, with the most notable being the regions of Waikiki, Nanakuli, Kailua, and Honolulu.

The word *ahupua‘a* is formed from two words: *ahu* and *pua‘a*. *Ahu* refers to the stacks of rocks and stones that were laid out at the edges of each district boundary. The word *ahu* literally means stone altar or mound.

These stacks were typically laid out to represent an image of a pig or *pua‘a*. Usually, these were carved wooden images of a pig’s head. Moreover, pigs were laid on altars as offerings to other tribe leaders as signs of peace and

respect. However, other offerings were sometimes used instead.

While the *aliʻi nui* ran each island and acted as the ruling king, they would have help in doing so. Each district (*moku*) would have a chief called an *aliʻi ʻaimoku*. Each division of the *moku* (*ahupuaʻa*) would have a *konohiki*. These were lesser chiefs, and they would ensure that the proper tribute was paid to the king. They also attended to the people's needs, such as making sure there was enough water to go around and distributing land.

The organization of the islands was quite astounding, even by today's standards. While the infrastructure was not advanced, especially compared to other civilizations that existed around or before this time, such as the Roman or Chinese empires, there is no doubt that the Hawaiians were thriving.

The Essence of Taro and Other Foods

While Hawaii was divided so the people could better control it, most Hawaiian divisions had pretty much everything they needed to succeed and thrive. The ocean was used for fishing, and the trees and jungles were full of foods like coconuts. Taro was one of the most popular food sources. In addition to being the primary food source of the island, it also held sacred properties. It is still incredibly popular today, especially throughout the Asian and Polynesian territories.

Taro comes from the Araceae plant family, and it was widely used throughout ancient Hawaiian culture as food and for its proclaimed healing and medicinal properties. And the ancient Hawaiians were actually onto something there. Nowadays, modern science has proven that taro is full of potassium and vitamins, including the essential vitamins A, B, C, and E. It is also rich in copper and magnesium, making it a great all-around foodstuff. Perhaps this is why it is still so popular today.

In fact, ancient Hawaiians revered taro so much that it is even included as a part of their origin story.

Long ago, in the days when Hawaii was young, the Hawaiian people used to tell stories about how their islands were formed. Many of these legends have been passed down through the generations by word of mouth, yet others are preserved in ancient chants and writings. Some claim that the gods still live in Hawaiʻi today, watching over her people and protecting them from harm.

In the beginning, everything in the Hawaiian Islands was made by the gods, from volcanic fire to misty rain and from palm trees and lush green forests to jagged cliffs and golden beaches. The drinking water that flows from deep

within the earth’s crust to mana—a spiritual energy that permeates all living things—is all due to the gods.

There are many different legends, but the one we will retell here involves the sky god, Wākea. He married Papahānaumoku, a princess and a goddess of the earth. They created the islands together. They also created a daughter, whom they named Hoʻohokukalani. She grew up to be incredibly beautiful and became the keeper of the stars.

Her father longed to have her. But Wākea knew it would be impossible to bed Hoʻohokukalani while Papahānaumoku was around, so he sent her away. He ended up sleeping with his daughter, and she bore a child. Unfortunately, the child was stillborn, and the heartbroken parents buried the child on Earth, where Hawaii was. A taro plant grew where the body had been laid to rest.

A second child was eventually born to the two gods: Haloa. This child became the father of the Hawaiian people. He knew the taro plant had come from his older brother, so he thought the taro plant contained his spirit and essence. The ancient Hawaiians held the same kind of respect for the taro plant. It was a love that has been passed down through the many generations of Hawaiians who lived on the islands. Even today, it is seen as a sacred plant.

Therefore, there were strict rules in place when it came to taro plants. They were so strict, in fact, that only men were allowed to prepare any dish that used taro. As a note, for those interested in trying taro themselves, you must make sure to cook it. Almost every part of the taro plant is toxic in its raw form.

From an ecological standpoint, Hawaii is the perfect place for such a plant to grow. The two most important things that taro needs to grow are warm weather and moisture. Hawaii is surrounded by the ocean, but it is home to numerous water reservoirs and a handful of lakes.

Taro was often grown in two ways on the island. The first method involved creating a pond. Taro would be cultivated near this pond, and they would later flood the land. When it came to growing taro on the mountains, where the land was very fertile, farmers would dig holes almost a foot deep and plant the taro there. Once they began to sprout, the farmers would cover the holes with mud.

What is more, the raised ground of the mountains causes rain clouds coming in off the ocean to cluster and condensate, thus creating opportunities for the

land to flood. This would send essential minerals and nutrients from the mountaintops down to the growing lands. In short, crops had ample opportunities to thrive on the islands.

These flooded, wet areas or irrigation fields were known as *loʻi*, and they were known for being constantly submerged under several inches of water at all times. There is even clear evidence that many of the islands were covered in conduits that traveled from the flooded taro fields. They would carry water to more remote parts of the island and society in general.

This created the perfect environment to grow many crops. Thus, the valley areas where this farming took place, such as the Hanalei Valley on the island of Kauaʻi, were home to many people.

Some of the other foods the Hawaiians were famous for growing included staples like breadfruit, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, and bananas.

Even outside the farmlands, the rest of the land was resourcefully used. For instance, wood from nearby forests was used for constructing buildings and tools and for fueling fires.

Down at the coast, you would find people fishing or searching for other marine life. Women and children would take part in inland fishing, which saw the Native Hawaiians exploring shallow reef areas and pools for aquatic life. These could be caught by hand, although nets, baskets, and spears could also be used. The Hawaiians used plants to their advantage, creating concoctions that would stun the fish and draw them to the surface.

A photograph of a Hawaiian fisherman, 1915. (Credit: Historic Photographs of Old Hawai‘i)

Canoe fishing tended to be reserved for men only. Fishermen would paddle out to deep-sea fishing areas, with knowledge of the best areas being passed down through the generations. The fishermen could either catch fish in the open sea or use the stone-walled fishing circles, which encased the fish, making them easier to catch. Some of these stone circles still stand to this day and date back over one thousand years.

Fish were often eaten right then and there, but the Hawaiians did preserve fish by drying them. Sometimes, they would salt them before laying them on racks on the beach so they could dry in the sun. Some of the most popular marine life captured besides fish include crabs, octopi, lobsters, eels, seaweed, and shrimp.

In short, the Hawaiians were incredibly successful in their efforts to feed their

families and create a permanent home.

The Craftsmanship of Ancient Hawaii

There is no doubt the ancient Hawaiians were successful, for the most part, in what they set out to achieve. They were farmers, navigators, explorers, and fishermen at heart. Some consider them to be the best who ever lived.

But while the Native Hawaiians tend to be remembered for their adventurous nature, they were also innovative craftsmen. The ancient Hawaiians did not have metal pots or tools at the time. Even though the Bronze and Iron Ages had come and gone, Hawaii was far from this kind of innovation due to the isolated nature of the islands. On top of this, these kinds of metals were not even present on the islands, so there was not much chance of making items out of them. They likely had knowledge of metals, but this was due to debris washing onshore.

Instead, the people used more traditional materials for their tools. Some of the most common resources were shells, bones, stones, and even the teeth of both humans and animals.

However, the artistry and passion that Native Hawaiians had with their work are beyond comparison. The Romans were known for their infrastructure and architecture, while the Hawaiians were (and still are) renowned for their expert craftsmanship.

Back then, houses in Hawaii were built with carved wooden frames and thatched with strung leaves. Sure, this was not the Colosseum, but the homes were perfect for the tropical conditions that the Hawaiians lived in. Evidence suggests that public buildings were built in a similar way, and they were even kitted out with benches and tables to sit at.

Life was simple. Much of the food was cooked using hot stones that were heated via campfires. The food was then left to simmer on top of holes dug into the ground. However, the vast majority of food, including fish, was eaten raw.

In terms of clothing, the traditional image you might have of Hawaiians is what was true at the time, which is likely where many of the stereotypes stem from. Men would wear a traditional loincloth, known as a *malo*. Women would wear skirts called *pa‘u*. These were not grass skirts, which is perhaps the common image of Hawaiian women’s clothing. These would only be introduced to the islands in the late 1800s.

Rather, both *malo* and *pa‘u* were made of plant fibers. Tops were

occasionally worn as well, but since the climate was so hot, many went without. This would change once the Europeans arrived, as did many other things. So, yes, the idea that Hawaiian women and other women of the Pacific wore coconut bras is entirely incorrect.

Much of their clothing was made from *kapa*, which is barkcloth. On other Pacific islands, this was called *tapa*. *Kapa* would be made from pounding the bark of certain trees, which would turn the bark into fabric.

The bark would be stripped from the tree, with the most common tree in Hawaii used to make *kapa* being the wauke or paper mulberry tree. The bark would be cleaned, boiled or steamed, and then beaten. And it was *really* beaten. While the bark was being pounded, the fibers of the bark would stretch, causing the material to soften. After this, it would be dried in the sun to make it strong.

The people would then dye the material and create intricate patterns on them. This cloth was used for clothing, as well as blankets and other decorative items, like tapestries or bedding. Today, Hawaiians do not typically wear *kapa*, as it is an incredibly time-consuming process, but it is sometimes worn on important occasions, like weddings. Hawaiians are working on preserving this beautiful art form, so it will hopefully be around for a very long time.

An example of* tapa *from Samoa, 1890s. Keep in mind this was done entirely by hand. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Of course, we cannot talk about Hawaiian craftsmanship without mentioning their skillful boatbuilding, especially since sailing and exploring were what they were best known for. The ancient Hawaiians mainly stuck with canoes, which they often used to travel to fish with or between the various islands.

Their canoes were about the same size as recreational canoes today, between fifteen to twenty-four feet long. However, their canoes varied in size. Double-hulled canoes would be as long as thirty to seventy feet long. The largest one ever measured by a European explorer was around 107 feet long! These large canoes were necessary for carrying not just human passengers but also livestock and other forms of cargo, such as crops.

Ancient Hawaiians made their boats out of trees. But it was not as easy as finding a tree and deciding it would make a great canoe. A person would have to consult a kahuna (an expert) who specialized in canoe-building. He would have to decipher his dreams and figure out which tree to cut down.

Canoes were typically made from koa trees, which are very plentiful on the Hawaiian Islands even today. Prayers would be invoked, and rituals would be performed before, during, and after the tree was cut down. After this, the boat would be shaped using various tools.

The Hawaiians used a number of different tools to make their canoes. The stone adze was probably the most important tool of them all, as it was used in the felling process and the carving process. It was a tool you could find in most households. Adzes were made from basalt, which is a hard, black volcanic rock. They would be tied to a handle with cords made from coconut fiber. These cords played an important role in the canoe-building process as well. The islanders would use ropes or cords made from coconut fiber to lash together the logs and rig up the sails.

Different parts of the boat would be crafted out of other trees. For instance, the boom, the part of the boat that allows you to adjust the angle of the sail, would be made out of lighter wood. For instance, it could be made from a tree called wiliwili. Not all canoes had sails; some just had paddles, while others used both.

The Gender Differences in Ancient Hawaii

We have touched on this a little already, such as how men were able to have multiple wives and how women were not allowed to handle sacred foods like

taro. Now we will dive into some of the other gender norms of the time so we can have a clearer understanding of what life was like back then.

While there were rules in place that stated how women should act and what they could and could not do, many believed that women were still respected and treated well in their communities, especially in comparison to how other women were treated at the time. However, this is, of course, both subjective and relative.

When the missionaries arrived on the islands in 1820, they described Hawaiian women as “lazy.” Men were responsible for carrying out any hard labor tasks that needed to be done, as well as all of the fishing and agricultural work. Men were also in charge of most of the cooking.

On the other hand, women were in charge of making the clothing, crafting mats, and creating any fabric products that needed to be made. They were also responsible, for the most part, for raising children, and they would also collect shellfish and do other light labor tasks.

Nevertheless, just like the men, women would enjoy ample downtime to participate in many activities, including swimming, dancing, surfing, racing, and playing games, which included variations on checkers (*kōnane*) and bowling (*maika*). Gambling on the outcome of these games was very popular.

Interestingly, ancient Hawaiians had a third gender role, which was known as *māhū*. This *māhū* gender (meaning “in the middle”) is known in both Hawaiian and other Tahitian cultures. It is usually adopted by those in religious or spiritual roles. Typically, a *māhū* was born male but would become gender-neutral once they progressed into their cultural role.

Since temples were off-limits to women, the *māhū* performed the hula dances to the goddesses and performed the feminine roles in these spaces. The *māhū* were important in Hawaiian culture, and they were even responsible for naming the newborn children. Today, *māhū* is used to refer to different genders and sexual orientations.

Wāhine is the term used in Hawaii for women. Men would be called *kāne*. Today, when people think of Hawaiian women and their role in culture, hula usually pops into their minds first. There are different forms of hula, but the traditional style of the dance celebrates chiefs and deities. Every motion of the dance signifies something. For example, hand movements could represent the ocean’s waves. These dances were seen as holy, so practicing this dance was deemed essential. A chant would often be said during the dance, and the

common instruments used during these ceremonies included gourd drums and gourd rattles. As an interesting side note, these chants would contain important historical information, which was one way Hawaiian history was passed down.

However, no one is quite sure where the dance originated. According to tradition, it was a gift from the gods. On top of this, it is not known for sure if women were allowed to dance the hula initially. When James Cook arrived in 1778, he noted that he saw women dancing. It does seem likely that women did perform this dance, as its origins tend to note that the early dancers of hula were goddesses. Although we cannot put complete faith in legends and myths, there is typically a kernel of truth. If goddesses were seen as the original hula dancers, it only stands to reason that women could also dance it. Today, hula is typically danced by women.

In ancient Hawaii, women hula dancers would have worn just a skirt and no top. Ancient Hawaii had a different view of sex and nudity than other places did at this time. The Hawaiians did not see their genitals as a shameful thing. The only reason they covered the lower half of their body was to protect it. In fact, nudity was seen as a sign of respect. Of course, that depended on the situation. Being nude might also show submission or acted as a way to ask for forgiveness.

At a young age, both boys and girls would be taught what to expect from sex and their roles for the future. Hawaiian society did not place shame on the act of sex, and the adults encouraged adolescents to experiment. However, the act of an older man sleeping with a younger boy was not the norm as it was in places like ancient Greece. And when it came to the act of sex itself, age did not play as big of a role as it did in Europe, for example. Rather, it was based on maturity. Ancient Hawaiians' views on sex were incredibly progressive, perhaps even more so than in most contemporary societies. Of course, along with a lot of other things, these views changed once the Europeans arrived.

But there were still boundaries and rules in place that needed to be followed. When it came to female *ali'i*, especially the first-born daughter, virginity was important. They would be betrothed at a very young age so they knew what was expected of them. Once they were married to a chief, they could have multiple lovers. In addition, when any woman experienced her monthly cycle, known as *waimaka lehua,* they had to live entirely separately from the men until it was over. This was a common practice in many cultures, and it is still practiced in some places today.

There were also other rules. For example, men and women were not allowed to eat together, and their meals could not be prepped together. An *imu*, which was basically a firepit oven, was used for prepping the men's food, while a different one was used for the women's food. Men and women were not even allowed to eat together. Instead, they would eat in separate huts, which were known as *hale mua* (men's eating hut) and *hale ʻaina* (women's eating hut). *Nā hale* ("the houses") were the buildings that made up the community; they were built using logs, thatched grasses, and small stones.

Even the foods that men and women could eat differed. In addition to being restricted from consuming taro, women were not allowed to eat other sacred foods, including coconuts, pigs, certain kinds of fish, and bananas.

Every one of these rules was defined by the *kapu*, or the law of Hawaii, which is something we will go into detail later. However, it is important to keep this in mind, for these rules were not just suggestions. Failing to abide by them or breaking the *kapu* in any way was punishable by death.

However (and this is a big however), how men and women were treated dramatically varied from island to island, and many had their own differences when it came to the *kapu*. For example, on Maui and Hawaiʻi (the Big Island), common women were allowed to till the ground and collect both food and firewood. On Niʻihau, women were allowed to fish and could even be priests. On other islands, these roles were strictly prohibited.

All that being said, Hawaii celebrated women. The ancient Hawaiians had a chant of creation known as the *Kumulipo*. The verses describe the first human being, which was a woman known as Laʻilaʻi. Another legend, which we recounted above, states that Haloa was the first human. Hawaiian legends do have some differences, something that is common with most ancient civilizations. Regardless, women were seen as life-givers, and their importance in ancient Hawaiian society is clear.

The Caste System

Ancient Hawaii had a social structure similar to a caste system. The ranks were as follows:

- Royalty, chiefs, and royal advisors; they were known as *aliʻi*.
- Priests and skilled professionals; they were known as a *kahuna*.
- Common people; they were known as *makaʻainana*.
- Prisoners of war and slaves; they were known as *kauwā*.

Within the kahuna class were skilled craftsmen, doctors, and dancers. The

maka‘ainana class consisted of all the traditional worker roles, including farmers, fishermen, and simpler craftsmen. We will touch on this later, but an individual’s rank was defined by bloodlines and how much mana that individual had. Mana basically refers to one’s inner spiritual power. You could also call this some kind of divine power. It was possible for a person to rise through the ranks as long as there was proof of the required mana level.

The *kauwā* class was reserved for slaves, prisoners of war, and their descendants. People from this class would often be used in human sacrifices. Both animals and humans would be sacrificed at temples called *luakini heiau*. It is likely they were sacrificed to appease the gods or perhaps the chiefs. There is also the possibility that they were sacrificed to bring about good omens.

The Housing of Ancient Hawaii

Up until the 18th century, buildings that were used for housing were pretty much unchanged. However, as time passed, their methods became more refined. The buildings for the royalty became more elaborate, and the structures became sturdier. Design-wise, though, everything remained relatively the same.

Perhaps the earliest form of housing was what we would call simple shacks or shelters. More defined building designs would later be used for homes, with simpler ones being used by fishermen and for the storage of tools and equipment, such as farming tools and boats. They were also used to store foodstuffs and materials like fabrics.

However, the everyday buildings in Hawaii displayed a lot about the occupants inside. The patterns in which the roof was woven, the plant fibers that were used, and the type of wood that it was constructed out of could all define the person who owned the property. It could show off their caste, skill, wealth, and profession.

This way of defining a person was so popular that when James Cook arrived in 1778, he used this kind of symbolism to identify houses and buildings based on their religious value and classed the inhabitants accordingly.

For more regal individuals, such as the kings and chiefs, feathers were presented at the front of the properties. This royal standard was known as *kāhili*. This was a symbol that all the chiefs and upper families would use to display their status. It was, in essence, a long pole with a cluster of feathers on the end. *Kāhili* could only be carried by *ali‘i*, and they would regularly be

used in ceremonies and rituals.

The Vibrant Culture of Hawaii

While Hawaiians were undoubtedly skilled in the way they organized and lived their lives, it was not all work and no play. Hawaiians excelled in their athletic pursuits, so it makes sense that this was one of the most celebrated aspects of their culture. Athletic contests were held regularly to figure out who was the best man or woman of a tribe, but they were also used as a source of friendly competition and to bring neighboring tribes closer together.

There is evidence that shows Hawaiians participated in many sports, including wrestling, bowling, running, spear throwing, swimming, fighting (boxing), and even a native form of surfing.

Surfing is something that is commonly associated with Hawaii today, so it is worth exploring a little bit more. Surfing was not always done on surfboards. Ancient Hawaiians would bodysurf or even surf on their canoes. Some people claim that Hawaiians invented surfboarding, but that is likely not true, as this activity has been documented on many other islands in Polynesia. However, Hawaii probably had the most advanced form of it. The surfboard one used depended on one's class. The *aliʻi* had slightly longer boards, which were made from lighter wood. Similar to canoe-building, crafting a surfboard involved intricate rituals. It was not as simple as cutting down a tree and fashioning it. These boards did not feature the iconic fin that surfboards have today; that would not be introduced until the 1930s. There were also rules when it came to catching waves. For instance, it went against the *kapu* for a commoner to ride a wave that an *aliʻi* wanted to ride or was riding.

Another popular sport was lava sledding, which is called *heʻe hōlua* in Hawaiian. They used a wooden sled called a *papa hōlua*. This sled would be around twelve feet long and six inches wide. Contrary to the name, actual lava was not involved. Rather, the courses were built along natural lava flow spots, which allowed the sled to reach maximum speeds. A person could stand, kneel, or lay down on the sled as they flew down the mountain. These sleds could go as fast as fifty miles per hour! Lava sledding was used as both a sport and for religious purposes.

An example of a* papa hōlua*. (Credit: W. Nowicki; Wikimedia Commons)

There is evidence that shows Hawaiians would gamble on many of these activities. While there was not any money passing hands on the islands, the Hawaiians would gamble with things like live pigs, coconuts, breadfruit, and bananas.

The Hawaiians enjoyed their downtime in other ways. The men and sometimes women would savor fermented drinks that could have narcotic effects. These were known as *awa* (pronounced “ah-vah”). Nowadays, this drink is known as kava. There was a special way to both create and drink *awa*, but it was not an addictive substance like alcohol.

Music was also an integral part of society. Hawaiians were fans of using instruments, such as nose flutes, string instruments, and even percussion drums. Their parties were both elaborate and engaging. Flowers were added to outfits in many different ways, especially during hula celebrations. This brings us to another popular image of Hawaii: leis. Leis are popular in most of Polynesia, but each culture used different flowers, leaves, seeds, and vines to create them. Leis would be worn or given to another person for many different reasons, such as a special occasion, but people could wear leis just because they wanted to. When it comes to Hawaii today, each island has its own lei, which is made with different flowers and represents different things.

On top of all this, the ancient Hawaiians loved poetry. Storytellers would bring to life the details of the Hawaiians’ legendary, spiritual, and religious history. Evidence suggests that the most popular storytelling mediums were

chanting, riddles, and sharing tribunal proverbs and teachings, which would have been passed down from generation to generation. Of course, Hawaiians did not have writing as we know it but instead used drawings and art, such as *kākau* (tattoo art). They would also draw on cave walls or create statues and small monuments.

Their primary way of communicating, though, was verbally and then passing that information along.

The Spiritual Beliefs of Ancient Hawaiians

Spiritual beliefs were a core part of Hawaiian culture. If animals appeared to individuals in a dream or vision, they were thought to be visits by family members who had passed away or their personal gods. They would carry messages or warnings to those who received them. Someone with more mana and, therefore, a deeper spiritual connection to the gods could have these visions for whole communities and tribes.

Religious practices were an important part of everyday life. For instance, prayers were considered to be vital. Prayers could be said at *heiaus*, which were the Hawaiians' name for their temples. As stated above, enclosed temples and religious spaces were off-limits for women. However, these sacred spaces were not open to the average man either. Only priests, chiefs, and kings could enter them during ancient times.

But not all *heiaus* were enclosed spaces. In fact, most of them were open-aired spaces. *Heiaus* would have different purposes; for instance, some were designated to help the sick while others were meant to encourage rain. Ancient Hawaiians would travel to these temples to pray for help with a particular concern or to thank the gods after being helped.

Most *heiaus* did not survive the test of time. It should be noted that this was not always due to the wear and tear of time; a good majority of them were torn down by Christian missionaries. Most of the ones that remained today were built later on, and some of them are closed to tourists due to their sacred nature.

Regardless, numerous temples were constructed and built across the islands, and they were regarded as special places of worship. Typically, these makeshift structures would have used materials like lava rock, thatched pili grass, and wood. Mini statues representing the gods would be made out of wood, and they would have been used as decorations and symbols that the people would then worship to prove their loyalty and dedication.

As with most ancient civilizations, Hawaii has tales that tell how the earth was created by the gods. The most popular legend tells of how Pele, the goddess of fire, and Nāmaka, the goddess of the sea, created the Hawaiian Islands. Whenever Pele was enraged, she would react by setting off volcanic eruptions around the archipelago. The magma would then flow down to the oceans, where it would fight with the water. Hence, Pele and Nāmaka were bitter rivals.

One of their fights got a little out of hand. Near Kauaʻi, Pele started fires, and Nāmaka responded by putting them out before fighting her sister. This is how the islands began to form.

The fight continued as the sisters headed southwest, with the fights creating the islands of Molokaʻi and Maui. The conflict even resulted in the formation of the Haleakalā volcano, a huge volcano that forms more than 75 percent of Maui. However, on Maui, Nāmaka was finally able to get the upper hand, and she killed Pele once and for all.

But Pele would not die so easily. Instead, she ended up traveling to the Big Island (Hawaiʻi), where she created Mauna Loa, one of the five volcanoes that make up the Big Island. Mauna Loa is one of the most active volcanoes on Earth today. This construction was so impressive and dominating that Nāmaka realized she would never be able to defeat Pele, and she conceded. Nowadays, the essence of Pele still resides in the peak of Halemaʻumaʻu, a volcanic crater that is a part of the Kīlauea volcano, while Nāmaka is confined to the ocean.

In addition to the gods told in this origin story, the Hawaiians believed in four other major gods: Kāne, Kanaloa, Ku, and Lono. However, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of other gods. They represent many different aspects of life, including tools, families, objects, professions, plants, and places. There are simply too many to list.

However, here is a short summary of the primary gods:

Kāne	Kāne is the god of the forests and the trees. Kāne is the most revered of all the gods and is placed highest in terms of importance. This is because he is also the god of creation and procreation. He gave life to the dawn, the sun, the sky, and everything that exists.
Kanaloa	Kanaloa is symbolized by an image of a squid or an octopus.

	These images are typical representations of the seas, the oceans, and maritime activities. Basically, he is the god of the sea.
Kū	Kū was the god of war, conflict, and wood-crafting. There are many beliefs that if you eat foods like coconut, then you are consuming the essence of the god himself, both in terms of physical and spiritual power.
Lono	Lono is the Hawaiian god of the land and is representative of things like fertility, rainfall, music, peace, culture, and agriculture. If you are thinking about anything to do with the land, farming, or natural resources, Lono is the god you should turn to.

If one wished to honor one of the many gods, there were a plethora of temples, monuments, and places of worship one could visit. These were constructed from stone, grass, and wood, although natural caves and other structures were used as well. They would be topped with idols representing the god themselves. There is no doubt that the Hawaiians' beliefs in these gods were behind many of their rituals and celebrations, including but not limited to feasts and athletic contests.

However, this level of belief continued past celebrations and social activities. It also penetrated how Hawaii was run and organized on a political level. This was not necessarily a good thing. As the years passed, the way Hawaiians ran their country became increasingly more destructive and plagued by warfare.

The Legend of Ka‘ena Point

There are many, many Native Hawaiian myths and legends, so we will only retell one here. This legend is about the westernmost point of O‘ahu. Near this point is a rock called Pohaku o Kauai ("Rock of Kauai").

Long ago, on a stormy night, a baby was born named Haupu. Even though the weather outside was miserable, a rainbow appeared above the house in which the baby was born. It was still there the next day after the storm had dissipated. The people saw this as some kind of sign.

And they were correct to think this. Haupu was incredibly strong, and he became a courageous warrior. He was known throughout all of the islands for his feats of strength and bravery. However, he also had a terrible temper.

One night, a chief of O‘ahu named Ka‘ena gathered together people and

supplies for a fishing expedition at night. Haupu was sleeping when he heard noises out on the water. Half-asleep, Haupu thought it was a group of warriors heading his way to do harm. He ran out to the cliff's edge and picked up a giant boulder. Using his superhuman strength, he heaved the boulder out into the water.

The canoes splintered apart, and many fishermen lost their lives. This included Ka‘ena. The impact of the boulder was so strong that the waves washed so much sand onto the shore that it formed a cape. The survivors of the fishing expedition named the point after their chief who had perished.

An aerial photo of Ka‘ena. (Credit: Travis Thurston; Wikimedia Commons)

The Way of the Kahuna

One of the most important classes that developed in Hawaii was known as the kahuna. The word kahuna itself basically translates into "expert," but it could have been applied to any field. The term referred to all kinds of professions, including doctors, surgeons, dentists, ministers, priests, and sorcerers. There were kahunas for building canoes and other crafts, as well as kahunas for navigation.

In ancient Hawaii, a kahuna would have been responsible for making sure

their area of expertise was taken care of, such as making sure crops grew and houses were sturdily constructed. Some kahunas would have also been responsible for blessing new buildings and ensuring there was good fortune on a construction project. They would have also been responsible for conducting weddings and rituals.

There is a book titled *Tales from the Night Rainbow*, published back in 1986, that recalls oral traditions and stories as described by Native Hawaiians between the years of 1816 and 1931. It is an old book of oral histories from ancient Hawaii. In this book, there are forty types of kahunas listed, with twenty of those belonging to a healing profession alone. This included such things as diagnosing sickness or pain (*kahuna hāhā*) or a medical priest (*kahuna lapa‘au*).

A *kahuna nui* was a high priest, but becoming one was hard. You had to master ten priestly classes in order to earn this label. These included:

‘Anā‘anā	Someone who practiced a form of prayer that was related to evil sorcery.
Ho‘ounāunā	Someone capable of sending spirits to someone else in a bid to cause them illness.
Lapa‘au	Someone involved in healing practices.
Po‘i ‘Uhane	Someone capable of capturing spirits for them to carry out a certain task.
Kuhikuhi pu‘uone	Someone who was an expert in finding spiritually connected places to build temples.
Kilokilo	A prophet who was capable of predicting the future.
Nānāuli	Someone who could read nature, such as cloud patterns, the direction of the winds, and when it would rain.

This list does not include all ten branches since some of their definitions have been lost to time. If you were able to become a *kahuna nui*, you would live in prestigious and spiritually important places like the Waimea Valley, which is also known as the Valley of the Priests. O‘ahu’s largest temple is located in this valley, which shows how religiously significant it was for ancient

Hawaiians.

As the years went by and as the outside world began to connect with Hawaii more and more, the word “kahuna” was used to describe priests that came from other countries.

The Distinctive Culture of Hawaii

It is very important to remember that even though the settlers of Hawaii came from Polynesia, the culture that was established on the islands grew more and more distinct over time. The way they functioned, as in how they built their saltwater fisheries, was brilliantly successful, as was their ability to grow food and work the land in a sustainable way.

As you can see from the sections above, the Hawaiians infused creativity into their lives. Their royalty would be decorated with vibrant feathers, and even the common people would dress in relatively glamorous materials that were colorful and expressive, especially compared with other cultures. The gourds, bowls, and containers that the Hawaiians used were intricate and beautifully carved.

This kind of beauty and attention to detail could be found in all aspects of ancient Hawaiian life, and it is what makes this culture and time period so interesting to explore.

A Hawaiian helm made of feathers, dated sometime before 1779. (Credit: Sailko; Wikimedia Commons)

Life on the Ancient Islands

At this point, you should have a rough idea of what kind of life the ancient Hawaiians led. On a day-to-day basis, they lived and worked alongside each other. They developed a strong belief system and leadership positions. They also figured out how to thrive in their environment.

The ancient Hawaiians lived their lives in pretty much the same way for hundreds of years. That is why we consider ancient Hawaii to stretch from the Polynesians' discovery of the islands in around 400 CE to 1778, which was when James Cook discovered the islands. The years in between saw the Hawaiians setting these systems up, developing the infrastructure, and finding their feet so they could thrive.

But, of course, their way of life would not last that way forever. The major change came when James Cook arrived on the islands.

Hawaii's history is very intertwined with itself, with various significant events overlapping each other, so we will bounce slightly throughout the timeline in the following chapters as we discover what tales unfolded on the islands and what life was like throughout those years.

We will first go to 1778, when Cook discovered the Hawaiian Islands. After this, we will discuss the political situation on the island before Cook arrived and what was going on when he walked upon its shores.

The colonizers of the world were leagues ahead in terms of technology, and Captain James Cook was one of the many explorers who set sail to make new connections and discover new lands. It just so happened that he ventured upon the tropical shores of Hawaii. And with those fateful steps on the sand, the life of Hawaiians would change forever.

The wheels of change had begun to turn, and the archipelago of Hawaii was about to change in a way that nobody could have ever predicted.

Chapter 4 – Europe Makes Contact: 1778

The first European to ever set foot on Hawaii was James Cook. Cook was a captain in the British Royal Navy, and even to this day, he remains one of the most famous explorers to have ever walked the earth. This is the same Captain Cook who charted New Zealand and mapped a way to the eastern coast of Australia. However, one of his biggest discoveries was the Hawaiian Islands, and it was a discovery that would later cost him his life.

James Cook's first voyage took place in 1768. Cook captained the HMS *Endeavour*, and his crew was supposed to chart the course of the planet Venus. They landed on Tahiti in 1769, and from there, he would head to New Zealand. He was the first European to have a conversation with the Māori, although he had help from a Tahitian translator. On his second voyage, which took place from 1772 to 1775, he circumnavigated the planet, becoming one of the first people to cross the Antarctic Circle.

His last voyage set sail in 1776. His goal was to return a Tahitian he had taken during his first voyage. This Tahitian, who was named Omai, enjoyed his time in England very much. He dined with the elite, and his quick wit made him a favorite of the upper crust. Cook was also supposed to keep an eye out for the Northwest Passage on this trip. The Northwest Passage is a North American passage that connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This legendary passage would be discovered in the 1850s, but it would take another fifty or so years for the passage to be successfully crossed.

So, after dropping Omai off, Cook headed north on the HMS *Resolution*. The HMS *Discovery* also made the trip; it was commanded by Charles Clerke. On January 18th, 1778, James Cook stepped foot on what is now Waimea Harbor, Kauaʻi. As far as recorded history is concerned, this was the first time a European stepped on Hawaiian soil.

The interactions were documented by Cook and his crew, and they wrote of how friendly and inviting the Hawaiians were. The Hawaiian tribes greeted the explorers with open arms, and they were, of course, incredibly curious about the ships that had traveled to the islands. After all, they were lovers of the seas and built ships themselves. There was a great interest in how the Europeans had used iron in their ships since Hawaiians were not very familiar with the metal. It is likely they knew of it since debris from shipwrecks would have washed up on their shores, but their knowledge would have been very limited.

Resolution and Adventure with fishing craft in Matavai Bay, *William Hodges, 1776. This is a scene from Cook's second voyage.*

After their initial welcome, James and his crew continued to explore the archipelago and gather as much information on the islands as they possibly could. He dubbed the islands the Sandwich Islands; they were named after the fourth Earl of Sandwich, John Montagu, who was also the first lord of the admiralty. This is also the same man who supposedly invented the sandwich. Cook and his men traveled north to Niʻihau and then left the islands to head northwest to find the Northwest Passage.

Cook mapped the northwestern coast of North America, but he did not find what he was looking for. In 1779, almost a full year later, Cook returned to the islands of Hawaii, settling down at Kealakekua Bay, which is on the Big Island. This would have only cemented the fact the Hawaiians saw this arrival as a religious event since this was a sacred bay. Kealakekua Bay was deeply connected with the god Lono, who was the god of peace, farming, and fertility.

Native Hawaiians were used to canoes and small boats that were capable of navigating the various islands, but boats designed to the caliber of the HMS *Discovery* would have been utterly mind-blowing, which might have led to the people thinking they were interacting with the gods themselves.

What is more, when James Cook arrived on the islands this second time, he and his men docked at Kealakekua Bay when the Hawaiians were engaged in their annual festival dedicated to Lono. Some scholars state that the Hawaiians saw Cook as an incarnation of Lono; however, there is a lack of evidence that proves this idea.

It is important to remember that Hawaiians would have seen this arrival of the Europeans as a hugely religious event. Since the landing site was considered a sacred place, the Hawaiians would have treated the European explorers as gods. Although some historians today state that the Hawaiians saw Cook as being the god Lono (the Hawaiian god of land), it is important to note that Native Hawaiians today believe that the ancient Hawaiians did not actually think that the Europeans were gods. According to Samuel Kamakau, a Hawaiian historian who lived in the 1800s, the ancient Hawaiians might have initially thought Cook was Lono but that he soon failed a test, showing he was mortal. “Here is the test of a god: if we tempt them and they do not open their gourd container which holds their ancestral gods, then they are themselves gods, but if they open the sacred gourds [the yield to the temptation of women], then they are not gods—they are foreigners.”

The Europeans were still treated very honorably and respectfully, but there is a strong possibility that the ancient Hawaiians knew that these men were not gods. Regardless, they would have done everything they could to make sure their visitors felt welcomed and well looked after. And if they did believe the men were gods, displeasing them would have certainly resulted in negative consequences on an unearthly scale.

Records have documented that the Europeans traded some of their iron nails for sex with Native Hawaiian women. As noted above, ancient Hawaiians had a different outlook on sex than Europeans, who likely viewed the women as “loose.” Prostitution was not a thing in ancient Hawaii, so these women were likely not trading their bodies in exchange for sex; the European men likely saw it that way, though. Rather, sleeping with visitors was seen as a way of strengthening ties. As time passed, the women began moving to important trade centers to sleep with the Europeans in exchange for provisions they could not obtain from the islands, which more closely resembles how we view prostitution today.

Cook and the crews of both ships were treated incredibly well, and they enjoyed the attention. They ate all the best food, took the best sleeping

places, and indulged in all the sex and other island luxuries they wanted.

There is very little doubt that the Europeans were taking advantage of the Hawaiians and their good nature. This same situation occurred time and time again when Europeans discovered other civilizations as they explored the world. However, this favor could not last forever.

After around a month, one of the European crew members unexpectedly died. The relationship between the Hawaiians and the Europeans became strained after this. Death was obvious proof that the Europeans were mortals and had no connection to the gods. On top of this, they had overstayed their welcome. Sensing the strain in their relationship, Cook decided to leave the islands, setting out from Kealakekua Bay and heading back out onto the ocean.

Yet fate had other ideas. Not even a week passed before the HMS *Resolution* was damaged at sea by storms. Both ships returned to the islands, as the *Resolution* was incapable of traveling. The reception Cook and his crew received this time around was very different from before.

Instead of being greeted with adoration and happiness, the Europeans were welcomed with a barrage of rocks and stones hurled by the natives. The Europeans did not have much of a choice, though, and they stayed on the Big Island to repair the ship. Tensions continued to escalate, and the Hawaiians stole one of the cutter vessels from the HMS *Discovery*. Cook and his men decided to confront the king of the island to negotiate and get the mast back from the Hawaiian natives.

These interactions did not remain peaceful. A lesser Hawaiian chief was shot, and the conflict escalated into an all-out riot. A mob of Hawaiians descended upon the group of Europeans. They used their guns to create a path so they could escape. However, some of the Europeans died, including Cook.

After this, peace was not an option. The *Resolution* shot their cannons while the men on board shot their muskets at the Hawaiians on the shore. This kind of firepower and military might was something they had never witnessed before. More than thirty Hawaiians were said to have died in the conflict.

It took a few days of defending the ships and making the vital repairs that were needed, but eventually, both the *Discovery* and the *Resolution* were able to set sail and venture back home to England.

This story details the first encounter that the Hawaiians had with the larger outside world, and it is clear to see how and why Hawaii became such a turbulent nation. This encounter, in a way, foreshadows the betrayal that

Hawaii would later face by outside nations.

After Cook visited the islands, Hawaii would never be the same again. The rest of the world slowly began to hear about this mysterious, tropical paradise, and explorers began to move in. Once the Hawaiians' history began to be written down, it made it easier to decipher what had occurred before Cook and his men arrived on the islands.

Chapter 5 – A Paradise Divided, and the Wars Rage On

Before we get to the significant changes that divided Hawaii and redirected the archipelago forever, we need to rewind a few decades prior to James Cook's arrival to the islands.

Like any nation in the world, Hawaii's population experienced power struggles, civil wars, and political issues. There were frequent fights between territories, some of which even expanded across multiple islands. This was especially the case between Hawai‘i and Maui.

Now, while this may not have been on the same scale as what was happening in Rome or mainland Europe or even rampaging warlords like Genghis Khan, Hawaii was not a perfect place. There was some kind of order on each island, and the *kapu* kept everyone in check. Later, around 1795, a monarchy was established that reigned over all the Hawaiian Islands for a little over a century.

But in the times of ancient Hawaii, the islands and their people had the power to convene courts that could settle disputes, calm conflicts, and keep everything running smoothly. Remember, this is what Hawaiian life was like for hundreds of years.

Of course, the tools the natives used developed over time to be more efficient, as did the way their housing was built, rituals were carried out, and the way disputes were sorted. However, how far the Hawaiians could evolve was always limited due to their isolation.

Nevertheless, this structure of the monarchy and chiefs was represented on each island, and it was a progressive system that cemented itself into place at the beginning of Hawaiian civilization. However, all this was about to change with the birth of Alapa‘inuiakauaua, more commonly referred to as Alapainui or Alapa‘i the Great.

While the actual date of his birth is unknown, there is no doubt that this one man and his actions changed the course of Hawaiian history forever.

Scarcity of Records

Before we get into the story of the Kingdom of Hawaii, it is worth explaining that up until this point, it is hard to pinpoint who the leaders were at which time since there was no written documentation or writing of any kind. If we were to look at rulers before Alapainui, there would be a lot of speculation

and little information to elaborate on. Much of the information would be a bit dull, as only the most basic information was passed on, or it would contain fantastical tales that are likely not completely true.

We will look at one early ruler as an example of how little we know and how history intertwines with myths. During the late 15th century, the ruler of Hawai‘i was Līloa. His compound could be found in the Waipi‘o Valley. He had two sons, Hākau and ‘Umi-a-Līloa, with his wife Pinea (who was his aunt on his mother’s side) and Akahi-a-Kuleana (his lesser wife), respectively. Hākau became the ruler after his father’s death, and ‘Umi-a-Līloa took that role after he rose up in rebellion against his brother. He went on to unite most of the Big Island.

This is not the most stimulating of reads. However, the succession of Līloa has another story. The Līloa bloodline was said to have gone back as far as Hawaii’s creation by the gods, so it is somewhat safe to assume that he was a part of the bloodline that had always held the metaphorical crown of Hawai‘i.

The beginning of the story starts the same; Līloa gave birth to two sons. However, ‘Umi-a-Līloa did not grow up with his birth father. Instead, his mother hid his royal identity from him. When he became sixteen, his stepfather was about to punish him. His mother said he should not since ‘Umi-a-Līloa would one day be chief.

The secret was out, and ‘Umi-a-Līloa took the tokens his mother had hid from him and showed them to his true father. Hākau was jealous of the attention ‘Umi-a-Līloa received, as Līloa favored him. When Līloa died, the throne passed to Hākau, but ‘Umi-a-Līloa was made his advisor.

The hostilities between the brothers were too great, and ‘Umi-a-Līloa left with some followers. Over the years, he gathered more men to his side. One day, ‘Umi-a-Līloa was walking alone in a forest. But he soon discovered that one of these trees was not a tree but rather a man! This man had to have been at least eleven feet tall. He had been transformed into a giant after eating a fish that had been given to him by a god. He said that ‘Umi-a-Līloa would one day be king.

Buoyed by the giant’s words, ‘Umi-a-Līloa launched a rebellion against his brother, and Hākau was killed. Some say that ‘Umi-a-Līloa sacrificed his half-brother to the gods. Regardless of his brother’s fate. ‘Umi-a-Līloa became the next king of Hawai‘i. In fact, he became one of the most honored kings in all of Hawaiian history due to his ability to unite almost all of the

districts on the Big Island.

As with most legends, you can find the truth nestled in this story. Many of the more famous rulers have interesting and unique tales about their lives. However, this book is going to retell the more established histories of rulers on Hawai‘i, which, unfortunately, is only a handful.

The Dawn of a New Age

Despite the lack of written sources, we do know a bit thanks to word of mouth. These events were passed down until James Cook arrived. These stories might have been told to the newcomers, who then wrote them down, although some of the tales might have been written down later. Scholars have spent time piecing together the facts and figuring out what the most likely course of events was.

We are going to begin with Alapainui, who was born in the late 17th or early 18th century. He was the son of Chief Kauaua-a-Mahi and Chiefess Kalanikauleleiaiwi. When he came of age, he became the chief of Kohala, which can be found in the northwestern regions of the Big Island. He was a chief who answered only to the king of Hawai‘i himself. But that was about to change.

During his time as the chief of Kohala, Alapainui was the people’s favorite. He was a well-respected ruler who put the people in his region first. His population loved him, cheered for him, and were content under his guidance.

In the late 17th century, the leader of Hawai‘i was Keawe‘īkekahiali‘iokamoku, who was also Alapainui’s uncle. He was also favored by the people. He created some semblance of peace on the island through marriage alliances with the chiefs. Keawe‘īkekahiali‘iokamoku ruled with his half-sister, who was also his wife, Kalanikauleleiaiwi (yes, the same Kalanikauleleiaiwi who was the mother of Alapainui).

When he passed away in 1725, his sons, Kalanike‘eaumoku and Kalaninuimamao, fought for the throne. This conflict quickly escalated into a civil war. Alapainui took advantage of the infighting, and he was able to usurp the throne. He took his place as the new king of Hawai‘i.

It was a bloody time, as Hawai‘i and Maui were fighting with each other. Regardless, the people saw Alapainui as a fantastic leader. He helped to resolve issues quickly and efficiently, and eventually, the two island nations came to terms with each other. But as soon as one conflict dies, another tends to sprout up. During Alapainui’s rule, Hawai‘i also had to come to grips with

its tensions with Oʻahu.

Interestingly, however, Alapainui's niece, Kekuʻiapoiwa II, became pregnant. This child would come to be known as Kamehameha I; this is a name you are going to want to remember. Kekuʻiapoiwa was said to have had a craving for shark eyeballs while she was pregnant, which was a spiritual sign that her son was to be a killer of chiefs.

Fearful of the prophecy, Alapainui tried to organize the death of the newborn. However, the child was able to escape with the help of Naeʻole, the man who had taken Alapainui's place as the chief of Kohala. Alapainui later changed his mind and was able to reconcile with the child, who would have been about five years old by this time. Alapainui placed him under the care and parental guidance of his first and most favored wife, Keaka.

Alapainui died in 1754, after which he was succeeded by his first son, Keaweʻōpala, who was, in turn, overthrown by Kalaniʻōpuʻu (full name Kalaniʻōpuʻu-a-Kaiamamao). Kalaniʻōpuʻu was the king when Captain James Cook arrived on the island. He greeted Cook personally and gave him fine gifts that were suited for nobility. When James Cook came back to the island after the storm damaged his ship, he tried to kidnap Kalaniʻōpuʻu to get the stolen cutter vessel back. As you now know, this led to Cook's death.

Kalaniʻōpuʻu passed away in April 1782, and he was succeeded by his son, Kīwalaʻō. His nephew, Kamehameha, was given the spiritual role of being the guardian of Kū, the god of war. And this is where the change of the Hawaiian Islands truly begins.

King Kamehameha: The King of Hawaii

While King Alapainui was respected, loved, and renowned for putting his people first, Kamehameha chose a far more ruthless path regarding how he wanted to rule. Thus began some of the bloodiest and most devastating times in Hawaii's history.

There had already been signs that Kamehameha would be a force to be reckoned with even before his birth. After all, his mother's pregnant cravings included the eyeballs of sharks, which was a portent of doom for chiefs on the island. And when Kamehameha took his position as the king of Hawaiʻi, this part of the prophecy was already coming true.

Kamehameha was born as early as 1736, and he was one of the greatest leaders in Hawaii's history. So, it should come as no surprise that he would be later dubbed Kamehameha the Great. He was the first king of the

Kamehameha bloodline, and his descendants would go on to rule the islands for generations.

In fact, Kamehameha is the king that is predominantly given credit for founding the Kingdom of Hawaii and eventually the unification of all the islands. But we will get to this later. For now, though, understand that this journey was not peaceful, and it affected everyone in the archipelago.

It might be interesting to some to learn that his birth date is disputed. Experts know he was born between 1736 and 1761. Early historians settled on the year of 1758 due to the passing of Halley's Comet. When Kamehameha was born, there were stories of a great star streaking across the sky. However, it seems unlikely this would be the year of his birth. The stories tell of Kamehameha fighting with his uncle; if he was born in 1758, that would make him a child. For the purposes of this book, we are going to stick with the 1736 birth year.

Since Kamehameha might be the killer of chiefs, he was taken away and hidden at birth for his own protection. He spent many of his early years in Waipiʻo and only returned to Kailua when he was five years old. He lived there with his birth parents until his father died, but his *aliʻi* training continued with his uncle.

Many believed that Kamehameha knew that he was destined for great things. By the time James Cook had arrived on the islands for the first time, Kamehameha was already a highly skilled warrior. He might have been one of the deadliest, as he would have proven himself on the battlefield multiple times by the 1770s.

Ever since Kamehameha was young, he had the dream to unite the Hawaiian Islands. He believed it was his destiny, and this is what everyone around him believed as well. After all, his mother had a craving that foretold his fate as a chief killer. And since he was placed in the position of religious guardian to Kū, the Hawaiian god of war, after his father's death, it should really come as no surprise that conflict was in Kamehameha's blood.

There are a lot of details that give the impression that this was the case. One version of Kamehameha's story says that his prophecy would be fulfilled once he lifted the Naha Stone. This stone, which can still be found today outside the front of the Hilo Public Library in Hawaii, held significant spiritual importance. Babies would be placed on the stone after their birth, and if they remained silent, they were considered to be a part of the Naha

bloodline. If they cried, then they were cast out. According to legend, the person who could overturn the stone would unify all of the Hawaiian Islands.

After several failed attempts, Kamehameha, at supposedly only fourteen years old, was the first person who was ever able to do this, once again cementing his destiny. If you take a moment to consider how impactful all these signs from the gods would have been to both Kamehameha and anybody who knew him, then it makes sense that his desire to fulfill his destiny would have been almost overwhelming.

A picture of the Naha Stone. (Credit: W. Nowicki; Wikimedia Commons)

But, of course, while one man believed he had to fulfill his prophecy of uniting the islands, some did not agree. They knew their power, influence, and control would be threatened by such an action.

Some of the ruling chiefs of Hawai‘i, including Keawe Mauhili and the Mahoe Keoua twins, among several others, rejected this prophecy. They basically denied Kamehameha from uniting the islands. However, five chiefs supported Kamehameha in his endeavors and swore to help him fulfill his dream.

Thus, the island of Hawai‘i was divided once more. This led to the Battle of Moku‘ōhai, which took place near Kealakekua Bay in Hawai‘i in 1782 (now known as Ke‘ei). This was the first of Kamehameha’s battles to take place. And the battle was ruthless.

The battle began due to Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s son, Kīwala‘ō, inheriting the throne. Kīwala‘ō’s half-brother did not receive anything, which upset him greatly. He began cutting down Kamehameha’s sacred coconut trees. Kamehameha, who now had the backing from the other chiefs, felt he had no choice but to take decisive action.

Women and children were guided to Pu‘uhonua o Hōnaunau, which was a refuge on the island. It was as if both sides knew how bloody this battle would be.

Chief Kame‘eiamoku, a high chief and trusted counselor of Kamehameha, was the first to be injured. Despite his injuries, he managed to kill Kīwala‘ō after he was knocked down by a sling stone. Kame‘eiamoku then slit Kīwala‘ō’s throat. Kamehameha was able to take the iconic ruler’s red feather cloak, symbolically securing his position as the leader of Hawai‘i.

In fact, once the dust settled, it became clear to all that Kamehameha had won the conflict. He secured his position as the leader of the northern and western parts of the island, bar a few independent leaders.

The controlled regions included Kona, Hāmākua, and Kohala. However, Kīwala‘ō’s uncle, Keawema‘uhili, and his half-brother, Keōuakū‘ahu‘ula, still controlled some of the regions. Keawema‘uhili had been captured during the battle, but he was able to escape to Hilo. Keōuakū‘ahu‘ula, the uncle, took charge of Ka‘ū.

Over the coming years, there were several smaller battles, all of which Kamehameha dominated. He would kill or capture (and then typically publicly executed) the remaining chiefs who opposed him.

The Olowalu Massacre

It was clear that tensions were rising on the Hawaiian archipelago in the late 1700s.

With news of battles, prophecies, and rising powers spreading around the islands, the common people and their leaders were rightfully worried. The people were scared that their blood would flow next, and their leaders did what they could to keep the peace while holding onto their land and power. It was a time of uncertainty, and it was unlike anything the islands had seen before.

However, there was an unexpected turn from the outside world.

In 1790, a man named Simon Metcalfe landed on Hawai‘i. Metcalfe was a fur trader. He had been born in Europe, but he was living in North America at the

time. The high seas were like a second home to him, for he spent much of his time sailing around and selling his furs.

In 1789, he had set sail on his ship, the *Eleanora*. It was accompanied by the *Fair American*, which was commanded by his son, Thomas Metcalfe. They had agreed to meet at the Sandwich Islands, which was what the Hawaiian archipelago was known as by the "outside world."

However, their rendezvous did not go according to plan, as the *Fair American* was captured by Spanish ships and taken to San Blas, which can be found today on the Pacific coast of Mexico. Simon and the *Elenora* still arrived to Hawai‘i, doing so in January 1790. He and his crew were greeted by Chief Kame‘eiamoku, the trusted counselor of Kamehameha who had slit King Kīwala‘ō’s throat.

Now, it is unclear how their initial interaction went. If we go by past evidence, the Hawaiians would have greeted Metcalfe positively and given him traditional Hawaiian hospitality. However, it seems as if the chief offended Simon Metcalfe in some way. This resulted in him hitting the chief with the hardened end of a long rope that had come from the ship. As you can probably guess, hitting a high chief of Hawaii with a bit of rope is not going to end well.

Metcalfe sailed to Maui to conduct some business. There, one of the smaller boats that was tied to the *Elenora* was stolen by Native Hawaiians. Perhaps unbeknownst to them, there was a man on board the stolen vessel. Angered by the theft, Metcalfe retaliated by firing his musket into the village, killing several Native Hawaiians in the process. He found out that the boat had been taken to Olowalu, a small coastal town on the west coast of Maui, so he sailed there.

After arriving at Olowalu, he soon discovered the stolen boat on the beach but found it had been completely dismantled and torn apart by the natives. The crewman who had been on board had been killed in the process. Metcalfe, who had already killed several residents at the previous village, did not hold back this time.

He turned the ship toward Olowalu after moving all of the cannons onto the same side, the side that faced the coast. He invited the Hawaiians to come trade with him, with many taking him up at the invitation and paddling their canoes to meet him on the ship. However, it was just a ruse. Once the Hawaiians were nearby, he rained fire upon them. It is believed that over one

hundred Hawaiians were killed by the cannon barrage.

Metcalfe was satisfied with his vengeance, and he sailed on, anchoring at Kealakekua Bay. Armed with only spears and basic tools, the Hawaiians knew they were no match for Metcalfe's cannons and muskets. They allowed the mooring to take place, leaving the boat and leaving the men to trade in peace.

A few weeks later, Metcalfe's son and the *Fair American* arrived at the archipelago, unaware of everything that had taken place. The Hawaiians were unaware that the ship was commanded by Simon's own son, but they had already decided to take their revenge upon the next foreign ship they spotted. And they did not hesitate. The Hawaiians sailed out to the *Fair American* on their canoes. They boarded the ship and killed nearly everybody on board, including Metcalfe's son. The only survivor was a man named Isaac Davis.

In the meantime, over at Kealakekua Bay, Kamehameha forbade any further interactions with the *Eleanora*, as he was worried the ships were in communication with each other and that more vengeance might be sought. A boatswain from the *Eleanora*, John Young, ventured ashore to see what was going on, but he ended up being taken hostage by Kamehameha's men. Simon Metcalfe waited a few days to see if Young would return or if the other ship would arrive. Eventually, he had to set sail, not knowing what had happened to either his boatswain, his son, or the other ship.

Kamehameha was given Isaac Davis and the *Fair American*, which was much smaller than the *Eleanora*. Isaac Davis and John Young would act as military advisors and translators in Kamehameha's quest to unite the islands. In addition to these two valuable men, Kamehameha also gained the cannons from the *Fair American*, which will play an important role later on in the story.

As you can see, there were many different conflicts that plagued the islands. However, the real change took place later that same year (1790). It was perhaps one of the most notable events of ancient Hawaiian history.

The Battle of Kepaniwai

This battle is also referred to as the Battle of the Dammed Waters of ʻĪao or the Battle of the Clawed Cliffs. It was, by far, one of the most devastating conflicts of the region, and it is one that many agree was a pivotal point in Hawaii's history.

The bloodshed far outweighed that of the previous conflicts with the foreign

European explorers and even internally between the islands. It is renowned by historians for being one of the landmark battles of the region. It was bitterly fought until the end, with devastating losses on both sides.

The year was 1790. King Kahekili II of Maui was visiting O‘ahu, which is located in the north of the archipelago. During the visit, King Kamehameha took the opportunity to land his fleet of boats and soldiers in Kahului, which was not far from the base of ‘Īao Valley, a beautiful, lush valley in western Maui. Kamehameha’s army was one of the most aggressive armies to have ever been assembled on the Hawaiian Islands. It consisted of over 1,200 highly skilled warriors, and they wielded spears and other weapons. They also had canoes, which they used for navigating long distances in a short amount of time. The units were highly mobile and incredibly dangerous, and they were led by King Kamehameha himself, as well as Kekuhaupi‘o, his prized warrior and military trainer.

A picture of ‘Īao Valley today. (Credit: Mark Fickett; Wikimedia Commons)

The men made their way up the western coast of Maui and eventually encountered King Kahekili II’s son, Kalanikūpule, and a handful of other Maui chiefs. They had set themselves up to block the entrance of the valley itself.

As it turns out, both armies were fairly evenly matched in terms of skill and collective numbers. The bloodshed that ensued would last for over forty-eight hours. And even after two days had passed, there was still no clear winner.

This is a powerful opportunity to put yourself in the position of the soldiers. Imagine mooring your canoe on the beach and marching with 1,200 of your

brothers in arms on either side of you as you make your way across the tropical landscape to the base of ʻĪao Valley. You know you are going to fight to the death under the leadership of Kamehameha, who was going above and beyond to fulfill his destiny. It is an incredible feat of bravery to consider and empathize with. For many today, it is certainly a surreal position to imagine yourself in.

So, after the forty-eight hours had passed, there did not seem to be any sign of surrender from either side. On the break of the third day, King Kamehameha decided to utilize the two cannons he was in possession of. These cannons were named Lopaka and Kalola, and they had been taken from the *Fair American*. Evidence suggests that these cannons were operated by two of Kamehameha's royal advisors, which just so happened to be the Europeans that had been captured: John Young and Isaac Davis.

The results were catastrophic. While none of the Maui chiefs themselves were killed, the cannon barrage decimated the lines of soldiers. There was so much death that it has been said that the river at the bottom of the valley became full of floating bodies. People have even said that the bodies dammed the waters. Those who survived stated that "the river ran red with the blood of the dead."

Fortunately for the *aliʻi* of Maui, Chiefess Kalola (the full-blooded sister of King Kahekili II) and her granddaughter Keōpūolani were able to escape the scene. They traveled west through the valley to the settlement of Olowalu and then went north to Lahaina.

However, there were still great losses. The Maui tribes had suffered a decisive defeat. How were soldiers with spears supposed to compete with the might of European military technology? Chiefess Kalola handled the negotiations. She offered up her granddaughter, Keōpūolani, as a tribute of peace and partnership, with the intention that she could marry Kamehameha in the future. At the time, Keōpūolani was only eleven years old.

This was not the only battle taking place on the Hawaiian archipelago. While King Kamehameha was busy attempting to invade Maui, Keōua Kuahuʻula, who was the last independent chief on the island of Hawaiʻi, had seized this opportunity. With King Kamehameha out of the picture, Chief Keōua Kuahuʻula gathered his men and raided Kamehameha's territories. He then returned to his settlement on the Big Island.

Of course, this did not go unnoticed. Kamehameha was forced to return to the

Big Island to deal with the issue, which meant he had to withdraw his troops from Maui. King Kahekili II continued to rule over Maui, and he also acquired cannons of his own. In 1791, Kahekili II took his soldiers and these newly acquired cannons and tried to invade Hawai‘i as revenge for the warfare. This, however, was in vain.

Kahekili II and his troops were defeated in the waters separating the two islands in a naval battle that became known as Kepuwaha‘ula‘ula. Yet, even so, Kamehameha could not take control of Maui entirely. It was not until a civil war broke out on the island in 1794 or 1795, after Kahekili II had died, that Kamehameha was able to make his move.

The invasion and consequential fights became known as the Battle of Nu‘uanu, a fight that Kamehameha would ultimately win.

Chapter 6 – The Battle of Nu‘uanu: 1795

With Kamehameha quickly fulfilling his prophecy of uniting the Hawaiian Islands and becoming the absolute king, the bloodshed was only set to continue. There were plenty of fights, but easily the most notable of all the conflicts, a fight that defined the direction of the islands, was the Battle of Nu‘uanu.

It is hard for historians to pin down exactly what happened during this battle, as there are several conflicting versions of it. After all, in war, the truth is nothing but the stories of the survivors and usually the victors. However, there is a general idea of what happened.

In 1792 (but it could have been any time up until 1794), an English merchant named Captain William Brown moored in the harbors of Honolulu, which is on the island of O‘ahu, the third-largest island in Hawaii and the most populated one. O‘ahu, at the time, was known as “the gathering place.” If the tribes, chiefs, and kings needed to resolve an issue, trade, or meet officially for any reason, then this was the place where they would go.

Due to Hawaii’s increasing connections to the outside world, specifically with traders coming to swap goods, Captain Brown would often sail to these ports. As a fur and gun trader, O‘ahu was an ideal location to stop for supplies while traveling. This was where Kahekili II was reportedly able to acquire cannons of his own.

While Brown captained several vessels during his lifetime, the most notable in Hawaii’s history were the *Prince Lee Boo* and the *Jackal*. After landing, he made an agreement with King Kahekili II, saying that he would assist the king with any military affairs he may find himself in as long as he was allowed to moor there and use the port for business reasons. It was a smart move, as Kahekili could use Brown’s assistance against Kamehameha’s ever-increasing forces.

As news of this spread, Kamehameha reached out to Captain George Vancouver, an officer of the British Royal Navy. In return for Vancouver’s help, Kamehameha basically gave the island to Great Britain around the year 1794. This was done under the idea that the British would protect the island for Kamehameha. However, neither Kamehameha nor Kahekili II ever met in person again after these agreements were made. Kahekili II died in mid-1794, and his son, Kalanikūpule, took over O‘ahu, which Kahekili had taken before

he died. His uncle (although some sources say half-brother), Kaʻeokulani, took the reins of Maui and some other smaller islands.

While these two men had their own conflicts and even fought against each other for full control of the islands at times during Kahekili's lifetime, they put their differences aside and mourned the passing of him together. However, after the two parted ways, Kaʻeokulani soon uncovered a plot that his head chiefs were going to throw him off his ship. In response, he convinced his chiefs to join him in going to war against Kalanikūpule.

This was a smaller war, at least compared to the larger one involving Kamehameha. It started around November 16th, 1794, and lasted less than one month. Kaʻeokulani commanded his men to march across Oʻahu to where he knew Kalanikūpule's men were stationed. However, once they found his army, they were also greeted with the artillery from Captain Brown's ships, which obviously decimated the units on sight.

Devastated with unimaginable losses, those who survived managed to somehow escape, fleeing into the valleys and mountains. However, while Kalanikūpule had won the conflict, this caused an entirely new set of problems. After a disagreement with Captain Brown, Kalanikūpule and his troops killed Brown and a number of his men and took control of both the *Prince Lee Boo* and the *Jackal*.

With weapons, men, resources, and recent victories under their belts, there is little to no doubt that Kalanikūpule would have felt indestructible. Just three weeks later, he and his men set sail toward Hawaiʻi with all the ships and canoes they could find. They intended to put down Kamehameha's efforts at long last and ultimately decide who the true king of Hawaiʻi would be.

But it was not to be. The surviving men from Brown's crew managed to take back both ships while they were anchored off the coast of Waikiki, a coastal town in the south of Oʻahu. With the ships commandeered, they then sailed off to inform King Kamehameha about everything that was going to happen.

Kamehameha seized the opportunity. He traded supplies for all of Kalanikūpule's weapons that had been stocked on the vessel. Soon after this, he began his assault on Oʻahu.

Kalanikūpule was not kept out of the loop. After hearing the news that the assault was on its way, he set up several fortifications on Oʻahu. He already had possession of a considerable number of weapons from the Europeans, such as muskets and cannons, but Kamehameha's inventory far outweighed

his own. Kalanikūpule knew he was going to be severely outgunned. They were effectively scraping the barrel for supplies in comparison.

Even though one of Kamehameha's chiefs, a man named Ka'iana, defected to Kalanikūpule's side before the battle began, they knew their chances of winning were slim. It has been rumored that Ka'iana had become slightly undesirable to Kamehameha. Once he was taken out of Kamehameha's inner circle, he feared that he would be killed, exiled, or be subjected to some other plot against him, so he decided to flee for his life.

During the crossing to the main island for Kamehameha's assault on O'ahu, Ka'iana steered his boat away from the main fleet and instead landed on the northern side of the island. Ka'iana and his troops started to dig into the mountainside of Nu'uanu Pali, a cliff that was a part of the Ko'olau Range. These holes would act as gunports for Kalanikūpule's men and his cannons.

Even with the help of Ka'iana, Kalanikūpule and his men were under-prepared and ill-equipped. Kamehameha and his forces had only grown over the last few years, and many were fearful that to stand against him meant they were standing against the prophecy that the islands would be unified under one leader. This was a prophecy set forward by the gods themselves. Kamehameha was prepared, and he believed he was fulfilling his destiny.

Of course, the people of the islands were divided. Some believed in the power of the prophecy and wanted to see it fulfilled. Others believed but did not like Kamehameha and would rather have another leader in his place. Most of the people on both sides were just fearful that their communities, families, and way of life were being threatened and that everything was going to change.

Either way, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that war was coming, which manifested itself in the Battle of Nu'uanu.

Come February 1795, Kamehameha had managed to assemble the largest army the islands had ever seen, totaling over 12,000 men and over 1,200 canoes. The troops were armed with muskets and cannons, far more than any other army in the archipelago. What is more, John Young had even taken the time to train Kamehameha's men in how to use the weapons properly, making them the most ruthless warriors in the region.

Kamehameha advanced his troops quickly toward the islands of Maui and Moloka'i, taking control over these regions with relative ease. A few weeks later, he advanced to O'ahu, and the infamous battle began.

The Fight for the Fulfilled Prophecy

The battle began soon after Kamehameha landed his troops on the southeastern shores of Oʻahu, right near the Waiʻalae and Waikiki regions, which are both near Honolulu. The troops rested for a couple of days, gathering the necessary supplies after their voyage to the island, as well as gathering intel via scouting missions to see what Kalanikūpule had set up.

Once they were ready, they marched west. They first made contact with Kalanikūpule's troops that had been stationed at the Punchbowl Crater. The crater is the extinct tip of the volcano, right in the center of where Honolulu is today.

Kamehameha strategically split his forces in two, sending half of his army around the crater's edge in a flanking maneuver while the other marched directly toward Kalanikūpule and his troops. Almost immediately, Kalanikūpule and his troops were overwhelmed by the pressure coming in from both sides, and he was forced to retreat to his next line of defense, which had been set up in Laʻimi.

Of course, Kamehameha was not going to let this opportunity go to waste, and he pursued his enemy. However, being the strategic master that he was and having the information from the scouting mission prior to the fighting, he dispatched a secret unit of troops up into the Nuʻuanu Valley to clear out the cannon and gun placements that Kalanikūpule and his men had set up earlier.

Once the cannons were cleared, Kamehameha brought forward his own cannon forces to rain terror on Laʻimi. During this fight, Kalanikūpule was wounded, and the defecting chief, Kaʻiana, lost his life. With the leadership ranks of Kalanikūpule's army falling apart, chaos ensued among the ranks.

Oʻahu's defending army had to run for their lives into the Nuʻuanu Valley, where they were pushed north toward Nuʻuanu Pali. Sadly, this cliff is known for being over one thousand feet high; it is basically a sheer drop to the roaring ocean waves that crash against the rocks below. A choice lay before Kalanikūpule's men. Should they take the plunge or see what Kamehameha's army of skilled and brutal warriors had in mind instead?

A photograph of Nu‘uanu Pali. (Credit: Lukas; Wikimedia Commons)

It is believed that many of Kalanikūpule’s warriors jumped to their deaths or were pushed over the edge of the cliff by other terrified soldiers in their panic to retreat from Kamehameha’s approaching forces. A century later, around 1898, a team of construction workers who were a part of the building crew for the Pali Road discovered over eight hundred skulls. They are believed to be the remains of those whose lives ended during this era-defining battle.

And thus, with Ka‘iana, the last of the defecting chiefs, dead, and Kalanikūpule missing, injured in action, the battle was swayed in Kamehameha’s favor. Thus, he had control over O‘ahu. He was yet another step closer to unifying the islands and fulfilling his destiny.

Of course, not long after the battle was over, Kalanikūpule was found. He was captured by Kamehameha’s forces and was ultimately sacrificed to the gods. His death caused the fall of Maui. From this moment, news of the battles and the word of the new leadership spread across the islands. For the first time in history, the archipelago was referred to as the Kingdom of Hawaii.

But alas, despite the victory and being one step closer to having fulfilled his destiny, Kamehameha was not yet finished. There was still much work to do in order to complete his mission. As one might imagine, the stories of the fighting, the power that Kamehameha held, and the fact he was succeeding in

what he had set out to do caused a stir among the other island chiefs and the people under their rule.

At this point, Kamehameha still had to capture and control the remaining islands of significance: Kauaʻi and Niʻihau. On top of this, there was an uprising on Oʻahu that needed to be dealt with. Nevertheless, the Kingdom of Hawaii was one step closer to being established.

Chapter 7 – The Birth of the Kamehameha Dynasty: 1810

Some fifteen years passed, and Kamehameha had been hard at work ensuring that the Kingdom of Hawaii would become and remain the powerhouse that he had always envisioned. He wanted it to be the kingdom that the gods had foretold he would rule. With the remaining chiefs, kings, and other regional leaders either dead, sacrificed, or surrendering to him and his forces, the Kingdom of Hawaii was nearly complete by 1810.

Over on Kaua‘i, the leader, King Kaumuali‘i, had been subjected to raids from Kamehameha over the years, but all of them had failed. He decided to negotiate with Kamehameha and surrender peacefully to avoid the loss of life. It was tempting to kill Kaumuali‘i, as Kamehameha had gotten rid of most of the other opposing chiefs. But Kamehameha was a bit reluctant this time around. However, even the other nobles agreed that Kaumuali‘i needed to go and pushed Kamehameha to take decisive action. Isaac Davis warned Kaumuali‘i beforehand, and Kaumuali‘i left, going home to Kaua‘i. So, instead of killing Kaumuali‘i, the nobles killed Davis.

And so, with the last remnants of rebellion eradicated from the lands, the unification of the islands was complete. The Kingdom of Hawaii rose from the ashes, and future generations would refer to the ruling family as the Kamehameha dynasty.

Perhaps Kamehameha’s most notable actions after unifying the islands were ensuring that the islands would remain united and that the empire he created would remain standing even after his death. Some of these steps included actions like unifying the legal system so that the laws of Hawaii were the same throughout the kingdom; before this, the laws changed depending on which island you were on. Kamehameha also set up systems that allowed products that were created on the islands to be used to promote international trading with faraway lands via trade routes. These routes were mainly with the United States and mainland Europe.

Both Davis and Young had become close advisors to King Kamehameha and helped Kamehameha connect with foreign trade routes and governing bodies. They were also of great use to Kamehameha from a military standpoint since they knew how the advanced European weaponry worked. This ensured that Kamehameha’s forces remained the most dominant force. After Davis died,

Young took care of his children. He treated them as if they were his own, and he evenly divided his lands between Davis's children and his own.

Kamehameha settled into his new position as the leader of the Hawaiian Islands. He was also seen as a religious leader, one very much associated with the god of war, Kū. But as the years passed and as Hawaii became increasingly connected to the outside world, other religions, mainly Christianity, were encouraged by European explorers who came to the islands.

However, King Kamehameha insisted that he would worship the traditional Hawaiian gods and told tales of how he had the power of the gods behind him. After all, he had managed to fulfill his destiny and unite the islands, thus becoming a powerful leader.

News of this conqueror spread so much that powerhouse empires like Great Britain did not send missionaries to the islands as they had with other countries since they believed Kamehameha's devotion to his own gods was too strong.

From the unification of the islands until his death in 1819, Kamehameha worked hard to secure his family's future and the future of the Kingdom of Hawaii. As stated above, the Hawaiian Islands had always remained relatively the same since it was first settled all those years ago. But now, with the changing ways of the world, it was extremely unlikely that it was ever going back.

The Later Years of Kamehameha I

Despite being aggressive in his efforts to achieve unity, Kamehameha lived a mostly peaceful life once he had secured his position as the king of all Hawaii. He worked on the laws of the kingdom and came up with new, innovative ways of bringing the people of the islands together so they could prosper.

After 1812, Kamehameha spent most of his days in the compound he and his family built. The compound was in Kailua-Kona, which could be found at the northern tip of Kailua Bay, Hawaii.

As was the tradition at the time, he lived there with his many wives and children. Modern experts say Kamehameha could have had as many as thirty wives, and it is believed he had children with around eighteen of them. When it comes to his children, it has been said that he had around seventeen sons and eighteen daughters. This means he had about thirty-five children in total,

and interestingly enough, he outlived over half of them.

The rest of his life was fairly peaceful. The occasional rebellion likely sprang up, but if it did, it was easily squashed. Kamehameha spent most of his time ensuring the islands would remain united after his death, which occurred sometime between May 8th and May 14th, 1819.

His body became the responsibility of his good friends, Hoapili and Hoʻolulu. They disposed of his body in accordance with the rules of the *hūnākele*. This was a custom in which a sacred body was to be hidden. By hiding the body, the power of the deceased's soul and being, their mana, would be preserved and kept away from those who did not possess the same power or purity. Kamehameha was put to rest in a hidden location. To this day, we do not know where he was buried.

Years later, King Kamehameha III (r. 1825–1854), the child of Kamehameha I, asked Hoapili to show him the resting place of his father's bones, but they were not able to undertake the journey out of fears of being followed by others who might harm the body.

The Death of the *Kapu*

Since nearly the beginning of Hawaiian culture, the people of the islands were governed by what was known as the *kapu*, which can be viewed as the ancient Hawaiian code of conduct. The *kapu* system was present in every single aspect of Hawaiian life, from gender roles, the politics of the islands, and even religion.

The people followed the *kapu*, and they did so even when the European settlers landed on the islands. To go against the *kapu* was a serious offense punishable by death. As mentioned before, the Hawaiians believed in mana, which is essentially a person's life essence, power, or soul. Kamehameha was rich with mana, but an average person may have only had an average amount of mana or perhaps even none at all. To go against or break the teachings of the *kapu* would mean damaging your spiritual power, making you a threat to other people's mana, hence why it was punishable.

The concept of *kapu* was not unique to Hawaii; it actually exists throughout many Polynesian cultures. Within these communities, it is known as taboo, tapu, or tabu. The Hawaiian word *kapu*, along with these other words, can be translated as "forbidden," but it can also mean "sacred," "keep out," or "no trespassing."

The *kapu* applied differently to the ranks in Hawaiian society. For example, a

series of restrictions known as the *Kapuhili* were invoked when anybody came into contact with a chief or king, but it could also apply to anyone with a high level of spiritual power. Let us say you were a common person, and you were called in front of a chief. The *Kapuhili* meant you could not come in contact with his hair, come in contact with his fingernail clippings, or look directly at him. You had to remain in sight of him while you were in his presence with at least one head height above him.

To go against these rules was punishable as per the guidelines of the *kapu*. The highest-ranking members of society, such as a king, had to wear red and yellow feathers as a sign of their rank. For anybody else to wear such feathers would be punishable.

However, understanding when and where the *kapu* applied was made clear wherever you went. For example, to enter a chief's personal space and carry out one of the above crimes would be punishable, but the space would have to be marked to say that the *kapu* was enforced there. This was usually done using *Pahu Kapu*, which is an image or engraving of two crossed staffs with a white ball on top of each one. These would be set up outside the homes or compounds of the chiefs and kings, making it clear it was a *kapu* space.

Another form of the *kapu* was the *ʻAi Kapu*, which defined how men and women were supposed to interact with each other. Through the *ʻAi Kapu*, the *aliʻi* (the nobles of Hawaii) were able to keep their power.

The *ʻAi Kapu* was responsible for some of the restrictions we talked about earlier in the book, such as the fact that men and women could not eat together. What is more, certain foods were restricted for women, such as pork, which was regarded as being the physical form of the god Lono. Types of fruit were also forbidden, such as most varieties of bananas and coconuts. These fruits were known as being the body of the gods Kanaloa and Kū, respectively. Taro was also considered a sacred food (it was considered to be the body of Kāne). Women were prohibited from not only eating these but also interacting with products from these fruits, such as coconut rope. Therefore, it was *kapu* for women to prepare, touch, or cook with these foods.

It is important to have an understanding of *kapu* since it was how Hawaii was run and organized since the early days. However, once Kamehameha unified the islands and became the leader of the lands, the *kapu* slowly began to be pushed to the side.

However, it was not Kamehameha the Great who ended it. His son, who was

also named Kamehameha, was the one to abolish it. The year 1819, the same year Kamehameha I died, was when the laws began to shift. Kamehameha II made the changes, along with his mother, Queen Keōpūolani. Another one of his father's wives, Kaʻahumanu, and Kahuna-Nui Hewahewa (one of the leading religious leaders at the time) were also involved.

On one fateful day, the four of them sat down together and ate a meal that consisted of forbidden foods, thus going against the *kapu* and effectively breaking its power. Up until that moment, the way the *kapu* was enforced gave power to rulers and chiefs all over the islands; in other words, it gave them power over the people. The chiefs and kings would make the decisions and take action according to the rules of the *kapu*. Now, though, the leading royal family was diminishing the *kapu's* importance.

With the *kapu* effectively abolished, the Kamehameha bloodline gained more powers as the definitive rulers of the islands, and it gave less power to the rulers and chiefs who operated below them. Thus, the political ruling system that had given the chiefs power and a degree of prestige was gone. The ruling Kamehameha family, alongside their advisors and inner circle, was now the dominant force of power.

The Law of the Splintered Paddle

While the abolition of the *kapu* was a definitive change in the way Hawaii was run, the shift in the power structures had started long before that symbolic meal. In fact, it started as far back as 1797 after Kamehameha was well on his way to unifying all the islands.

After the war, Kamehameha was on a military visit to Puna, one of the southern districts on the Big Island. While there, he came across a group of civilians working on the beach, and a conflict arose. During the fighting, Kamehameha chased two fishermen, and he caught his leg on a piece of reef and fell. One of the fishermen turned and smashed Kamehameha over the head with a boat paddle, shattering it into pieces.

Kamehameha could have been killed there and then, but for some reason, despite having been chased, the fisherman spared Kamehameha's life. Some years later, the same fisherman was brought before King Kamehameha.

However, instead of condemning the man to death, Kamehameha spared his life. He exclaimed to the court that the fisherman was an inspiration and had only been acting to protect his family as any man should. Because of this, the Law of the Splintered Paddle, also known as the Kānāwai Māmalahoe, was

created.
It read:
“E nā kānaka,
E mālama 'oukou i ke akua
A e mālama hoʻi ke kanaka nui a me kanaka iki;
E hele ka 'elemakule, ka luahine, a me ke kama
A moe i ke ala
'Aʻohe mea nāna e hoʻopilikia.
Hewa nō, make.”
Translated into English, this reads:
“Oh, people,
Honor thy god;
respect alike [the rights of] people both great and humble;
May everyone, from the old men and women to the children
Be free to go forth and lie in the road
Without fear of harm.
Break this law, and die.”
This is such an important law, especially the line “from the old men and women to the children/Be free to go forth and lie in the road.” If we translated this into modern terms, the law would read something like, “Let every elderly person, woman, and child lie by the roadside in safety.” This means the king would provide for the people’s needs and grant them safety. The same phrase is immortalized in the State Constitution of Hawaii (Article 9, Section 10), and it has even become a model for modern-day human rights legislation within the state.
However, it is important to note that Kamehameha did not create these laws; rather, he combined concepts that had been around for generations and put them into one diplomatic notion. Years before this law passed, chiefs in Hawaii’s long history were executed publicly when they mistreated the common people under their rule. Hawaiians were renowned for being intolerable of bad leaders and corruption. This was one of the reasons why Kamehameha was able to get his power in the first place.
Therefore, it is clear that by making this law, Kamehameha strategically put himself in a favorable position with the people of the future Kingdom of Hawaii. Making such a change in the law meant that there was less of a

chance of bad leaders having the power to do anything that impacted the people negatively; thus, the common people were better off because of it. This meant fewer civil wars and rebellions and more people who were content with the government.

Some fun facts surround this law, showing just how much it impacted modern Hawaiian society. You can find variations of this law in Hawaiian culture, including the aforementioned human rights laws, laws for protecting the elderly, children's rights, homeless initiatives, and even when it comes to bicyclist safety. And if you look at the badge of the Honolulu Police Department, right in the center, you will see a symbol of two crossed paddles, a nod at the law that was devised all those years ago.

And so, with the Kamehameha bloodline in power, the islands unified, and the prophecy fulfilled, the Kingdom of Hawaii was, at last, entering a time of peace and prosperity.

Chapter 8 – The End of Ancient Hawaii

This peace did not last.

The first Christian missionaries arrived on the islands soon after the symbolic meal that broke the *kapu* traditions apart and changed Hawaii and its culture forever. The year was 1820, and despite the hundreds of years that Hawaii had spent in relative isolation, the rest of the world had other ideas.

Hawaii now had connections to the outside world, as we have explored previously. Traders and explorers would pass the islands every now and then, stopping for rest, trading supplies with each other, and then moving on. Due to the Hawaiians' dedication, they held on to their gods and way of life.

However, as time passed, vessels from other nations became increasingly commonplace, as the entire world was becoming increasingly connected via shipping and trade routes. Hawaii would not be left out.

Around 1893, American colonists were in full control over the sugar-based economy that had been created throughout the islands. It was the primary driving force of the economy, and it had integrated itself into every aspect of Hawaii's life and culture. While Hawaii had managed to remain independent for so many centuries, the time to transform with the rest of the modern world had come.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves a bit here. Let us start at the beginning with the missionaries.

The Beginning of the End Started with One Man

It all started with one man named Henry Ōpukahaʻia, a young Hawaiian born around 1792 in Nīnole, Hawaiʻi, and there is no doubt that he had very little idea how much he was about to change the future of Hawaii throughout his life.

While there is little recorded evidence for what Ōpukahaʻia's early life was like (he would go by Henry later on in life), it is suggested he lived in his hometown on the Big Island. From diary entries and other self-recorded evidence from later in his life, we can ascertain that both of his parents died around 1800. He was only ten or so at the time. Somehow, he was able to escape the relentless might of the forces with his baby brother hanging onto his back, who unfortunately died after being hit with a spear during their attempt to flee.

However, Ōpukahaʻia survived, and he was even adopted by the same

warrior who had killed his parents. This guardianship would last just over a year and a half. During these eighteen months, Ōpukahaʻia discovered that his uncle was a kahuna at one of the nearby religious temples.

Through his uncle, he was able to contact the rest of his family and ultimately went to live with his grandmother and uncle. One day, he decided to visit one of his aunts in a nearby village. During his visit, his aunt was suddenly taken by soldiers for an infraction against the *kapu* and was put to death.

Even though he had been taken by surprise, Ōpukahaʻia was able to escape once again. He allegedly squeezed through a hole in the side of the house and then watched helplessly as the soldiers threw his aunt over the edge of a nearby cliff. Of course, this is a traumatic experience for anyone to go through, especially one who could remember the murder of his parents. There is no doubt that these memories stayed with Ōpukahaʻia for his entire life.

He eventually returned home to his uncle, where he dedicated his life to learning about the rituals of the temple so that he could one day become a kahuna and take his uncle's place. However, this was not the life that Ōpukahaʻia was destined for. And it seems he knew it as well. Later on, Ōpukahaʻia would learn to read and write, and he wrote of his experiences while learning with his uncle. In his memoir, he wrote, "I began to think about leaving that country to go to some other part of the world…probably I may find some comfort, more than to live there without a father or mother."

This was a powerful thought, and it was one he acted on. The moment the *Triumph*, an English trading vessel, moored in Kealakekua Bay, Ōpukahaʻia spontaneously made his way on board and introduced himself. The vessel was captained by Caleb Brintnall, who also invited another young Hawaiian boy named Hopoʻo on board to stay for dinner. Neither boy spoke English, but they both stayed for dinner and spent the night on the ship.

Because of their good manners and young age, both boys were invited to stay on the vessel, which means they were given the interesting opportunity of sailing the ocean. They traveled around the Pacific, went around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, and landed in New York in 1809. And Ōpukahaʻia did all this around the age of sixteen. He was about to do something that few Native Hawaiians had done at this point in time.

It was on this voyage that Ōpukahaʻia began to be called Henry. It is possible the sailors had a hard time pronouncing his name or perhaps did not care enough to learn it. But the name Henry stuck since the sailors called him this.

Both the boys barely considered what this meant and agreed to set sail with him.

Equally as important, Ōpukahaʻia was introduced to a fellow sailor on the ship. His name was Russell Hubbard, and he taught Ōpukahaʻia the English language. Hubbard took the time to teach him how to read and write, and he often used the Bible as a text to assist with these lessons. This was Ōpukahaʻia's first introduction to the Bible, which had a profound impact on him.

Ōpukahaʻia more than likely began to embrace the name Henry due to these lessons. After all, his native gods of Hawaii and even the culture of the islands had brought him nothing but pain and suffering. He lost his family due to wars and silly (at least in his eyes) infractions of the *kapu*. His childhood had been harsh and bleak. But sailing on this vessel allowed him to see that his future could be bright, and his dreams could be endless. It is no wonder he was so captivated by this new way of looking at the world.

A watercolor of Greenwich Street, New York, 1810. (Credit: New York Public Library)

Once the crew had docked in New York, the ship was sold, and a merchant took both the Hawaiian boys home for dinner. Take a moment to put yourself in the shoes of Henry and Hopoʻo. You would have spent all your life on a tropical island, surrounded by nothing but sand, trees, the ocean, and close-knit communities. Your whole life was then transported across the ocean to a vibrant city teeming with people, horses, sights, and sounds that would have

been dizzying, to say the least. Suffice it to say that it would have been nothing short of mind-blowing.

Picture stepping through the door into the merchant's house. This building would have been filled with so many rooms and other luxury items that it would have been beyond comprehension. Usually, ancient Hawaiian homes had a rather open-plan approach, with four basic walls and everything included on the inside—except for kitchens.

Henry and Hopoʻo would have been fascinated by the fact that the food was cooked indoors. Furthermore, this would have been taking place around the same time, if not before, the *kapu* was dissolved, meaning Henry would have only ever known life with the *kapu* enforced. This meant that women and men sitting around having dinner at the same table would have been completely surreal for him.

This was Henry's first experience with New York and the American/European lifestyle. He continued to live with Captain Brintnall and his family, but after a short time in New York, the family moved to New Haven, Connecticut. While living there, Henry met Edwin Dwight, who was attending Yale University. Henry wanted to master the English language, but his lessons with Brintnall were not proving fruitful enough. Dwight recognized his plight and sent him over to one of his relatives, Timothy Dwight IV (he was also the founder of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which was one of the first American missionary organizations). Henry's knowledge of English would rapidly enhance with Timothy Dwight, who was a much better teacher than Brintnall.

With this doorway opening in his life, Henry became very involved with Christianity. The more he learned, the more he began to leave his past Hawaiian religion behind, and the more he started to focus on the Christian God. In one written passage in his memoirs, which he had started writing in an attempt to improve and master his developing English skills, he wrote, "Hawaiʻi gods. They wood-burn. Me go home, put ʻem in fire, burn ʻem up. They no see, no hear, no anything. We make them [idols]. Our God—he make us."

As he continued to live with his new family, his faith became more and more ingrained. This heavily religious family pushed him even further into religious studies and pursuits, with Henry dedicating time every morning and every evening to prayers.

As the years passed, Henry lived an increasingly varied life in the United States. He moved around a fair amount, traveling to places like Torrington and other cities throughout Connecticut, as well as a few in New Hampshire. He typically worked on farms, learning how to plant, till the soil, and harvest crops, but he also made sure to get involved with local church groups.

Before 1814, he had begun speaking publicly in front of crowds about his Lord and Savior. He also began translating the Bible into Hawaiian and even creating a dictionary for the Hawaiian language.

During this time, he found himself talking with Christian missionary groups. And he was not the only Native Hawaiian interested in spreading the word of God; there were other Polynesians as well as Native Americans who wanted to take up this mantle. Of course, today, we could look at these actions with a different lens. These young boys were introduced to an attractive culture, with many of them likely seeking different answers to what had happened to them during their lives. Christianity offered that answer. These missionaries likely knew that native believers in Jesus could spread the ideas of the faith better than they could, so they encouraged their interest in further spreading the Gospel.

In 1816, the Foreign Mission School was created. This school was focused on turning people of non-Christian societies into missionaries. Of course, this idea excited Henry, so he jumped at the chance to help them achieve this goal, believing that Hawai‘i could massively benefit from the introduction of Christianity.

By 1817, a mission group of twelve students, with half of them being of Hawaiian descent, had been formed. They were training at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, where they learned how to become missionaries. However, within a year of securing his place on the mission, Henry became drastically ill. He was soon diagnosed with typhus fever.

Although he was treated, the treatment did not work in the long run. Henry continued to lose his strength, and on February 17th, 1818, he passed away. He was only twenty-six years old. The doctor’s note describes how peacefully he passed, with the statement detailing how he died with “a heavenly smile on his face.” In his later translated memoir, his last words were, “My love be with you.”

We know about the stories described above because of this memoir Henry had left behind. Nearly all of his experiences were recorded in his diary.

These texts are an incredibly detailed account of his life, his journeys, and how he thought and felt about his faith. The book was titled *The Memoirs of Henry Obookiah*. As you know, his name was not Obookiah; it was Ōpukahaʻia. However, that was not how English people spelled and pronounced his name since most of them were not able or willing to understand non-English languages at the time. Henry was buried in a cemetery in Cornwall, Connecticut.

The diary he wrote was published soon after his death, and it quickly inspired fourteen missionaries to embark on a mission to the Hawaiian Islands. Among them was a man named Samuel Ruggles. He was the only one who had met Henry face to face before his death. On top of this, Henry's work on creating a dictionary for the Hawaiian language and a translated Bible gave other missionaries a foundation for the first Hawaiian primer.

Although Henry never made it back to Hawaiʻi, his influence on missionary work on the Hawaiian Islands cannot be understated. And the people of Hawaiʻi eventually wanted him to be buried on the island. In 1993, a group of his descendants took his body from the cemetery his body resided in (located in Cornwall) back home to the Big Island. He was buried in Kahikolu Cemetery in Napoʻopoʻo.

There is even a plaque in the cemetery that marks the spot where he was buried. It is looked after to this day by the Ka ʻOhe Ola Hou, an organization set up to further Christian teachings on the island. In fact, this organization's origins date all the way back to that first missionary venture. Unfortunately, Henry would never learn about the impact he had on his native homeland, nor would he have any idea of what scale the impact would be.

The Land That Changed Forever

The date is now October 23rd, 1819.

A group of missionaries working for the Pioneer Company of American Protestants set sail on the *Thaddeus*. They were heading for the Kingdom of Hawaii. The journey took an estimated 160 days, but they finally saw the islands on March 30th, 1820. They moored at Kailua-Kona, a small coastal town in the west of the Big Island, on April 4th.

Their mission? To make people, regardless of class, knowledgeable and happy. To do this, they planned to introduce the natives to the Christian God.

This was the mission Samuel Ruggles went on. And it was led by Hiram Bingham. Today, he is remembered for introducing Christianity to the

Hawaiian Islands. He is known for influencing the Hawaiians' view on Catholicism. Due to his encouragement, Catholic Hawaiians were persecuted on the islands.

The arrival of the missionaries was devastating. When James Cook arrived on the islands all those years ago, he brought diseases. Most of these were sexually transmitted diseases, although some contend that the Hawaiians had already encountered some of these diseases due to trading with other Polynesian islands. However, Cook and his men seemed to spread the diseases faster than before. There were some diseases that caused death, but for the most part, the diseases Cook's men spread tended to cause infertility.

The missionaries, on the other hand, as well as other foreigners arriving on the islands, brought more deadly diseases, namely measles and leprosy. Other diseases included influenza, cholera, mumps, and tuberculosis.

While it is unclear what the total population of Hawaii was before all these foreigners arrived, it is believed that by the end of the 1800s, the Hawaiian population was only around thirty-nine thousand people. This means the diseases took tens of thousands of lives, perhaps even close or over one hundred thousand.

It is worth noting that Westerners often did not see the devastating death rate as a result of the Hawaiians' lack of immunity. Rather, they thought it demonstrated how dirty the Hawaiians were and how much they needed Western culture in their lives so they could thrive.

Between the years of 1820 and 1863, which became known as the "Missionary Period," over 180 men and women traveled to the Hawaiian Islands. On these missionary ventures, there was a selection of people who would fulfill certain roles. These ranged from teachers and printers to bookbinders, gospel leaders, and even farmers. The vast majority of these people were in their early twenties, meaning they were very energetic and passionate about the cause they were serving, making it much more likely that people would convert.

During the earlier missions, the missionaries focused on the most important communities on the islands and set up stations that would be home to the churches and schools they could use for teaching and religious purposes. By 1850, eighteen stations had been constructed, with six of them on the Big Island alone. The main buildings were originally constructed using traditional thatched methods, like the surrounding Hawaiian buildings, but they were

later constructed or upgraded using stone and wood materials. This made them far more impressive than Hawaii's native infrastructure and seemingly more appealing to those in the neighborhoods.

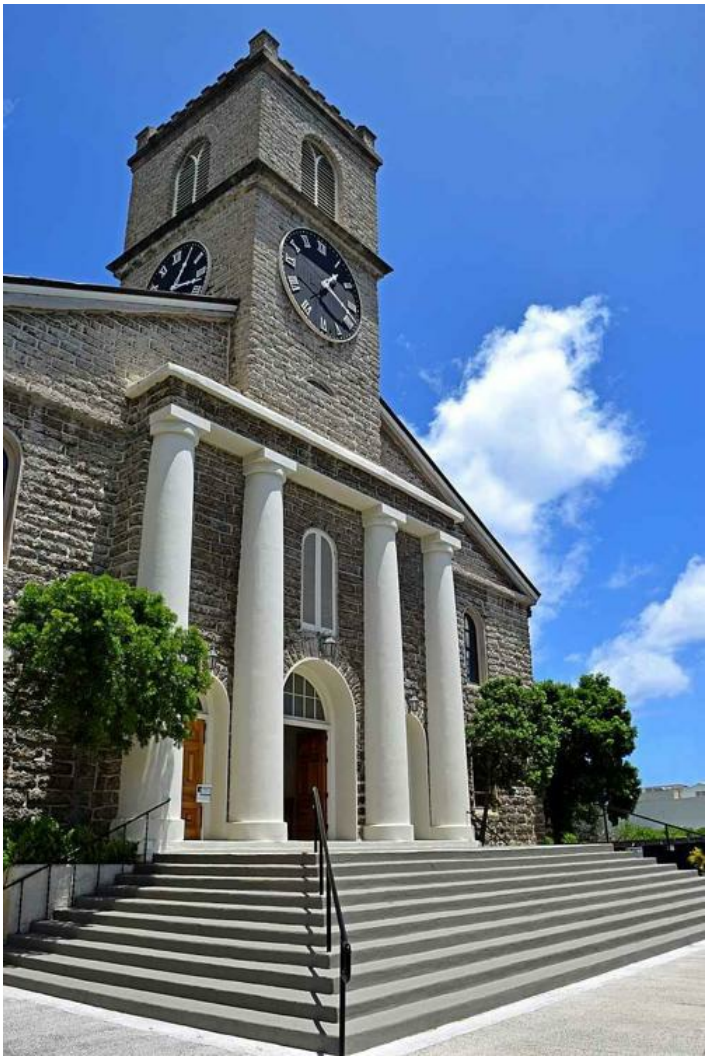
Some of the more notable churches include Moku'aikaua Church. This church was founded by Reverend Asa Thurston and his wife, Lucy. The building was completed in 1837, and it remains standing to this day. It is the oldest Christian church on the islands.

A picture of Moku'aikaua Church today. (Credit: W. Nowicki; Wikimedia Commons)

Samuel Ruggles set up his own church on the islands with his wife, Nancy, and another couple, Sam and Mercy Whitney. This was built during Samuel's voyage to the islands in 1819/20, and he would spend most of the rest of his life traveling between the islands. The Waimea Mission Church began to be constructed in the 1830s. Interestingly, the first service in this church took place in 1854 before the building was even finished.

The last church we will mention is Kawaiaha'o Church, which translates as "the water of Ha'o." Its name refers to the sacred water springs that can be found on the church grounds. The church was made from coral materials and was completed in 1842. Of course, many other churches were constructed, along with the houses that the missionaries lived in, all of which would have

out-scaled the Native Hawaiian architecture.



A picture of Kawaiahaʻo Church today. (Credit: Mark Miller; Wikimedia Commons)

Hawaii: Industry Born

Another important aspect that signaled the end of ancient Hawaii was the introduction of the sugar industry. Sugarcane had been grown in Hawaii since around 600 CE. James Cook made a note of it when he arrived on the islands in 1778. As more traders, travelers, and missionaries came to Hawaii, sugar began to take a more important role. By the end of the 1800s, the sugar industry was one of the biggest, if not the biggest, industries on the islands. Over 337,000 people would make their way to Hawaii between the end of the 18th century to the end of the 19th century to take part in this booming industry.

With this in mind, the United States had a major interest in Hawaii and what

it could produce, which included pineapples and coffee. For instance, in the 1960s, Hawaii produced 80 percent of the world's pineapple.

But we are jumping too far ahead with that. Let us take a look at how it all started. In 1802, the first sugar mill was established on Lānaʻi, a small island in the center of the archipelago, just south of Molokaʻi and Maui. This was actually constructed by a Chinese man, not a European or an American. Unfortunately, his name has been lost to history.

Soon, though, the first sugar plantation would be established by an American company. This was the Old Sugar Mill, and it came into being in 1835. The Native Hawaiians were not excited about this business taking up much of their land, but eventually, they relented. King Kamehameha III lent almost one thousand acres to the company, but initially, only twelve acres were planted.

The people running the Old Sugar Mill noted that the Hawaiians were "lazy." This, as you should know by now, was not true. Their culture was different from the capitalistic ethic that was spreading around the world at that time. The manager of the mill even went as far as to say that ten white men could produce the same amount of work as four hundred Hawaiians.

Workers were paid with money that could only be spent at the mill's stores, which means they were dependent on the Old Sugar Mill for practically everything. Eventually, the Hawaiians became frustrated enough that they decided to revolt. This, on top of the perceived lack of laziness, led to the Old Sugar Mill looking for workers from outside nations.

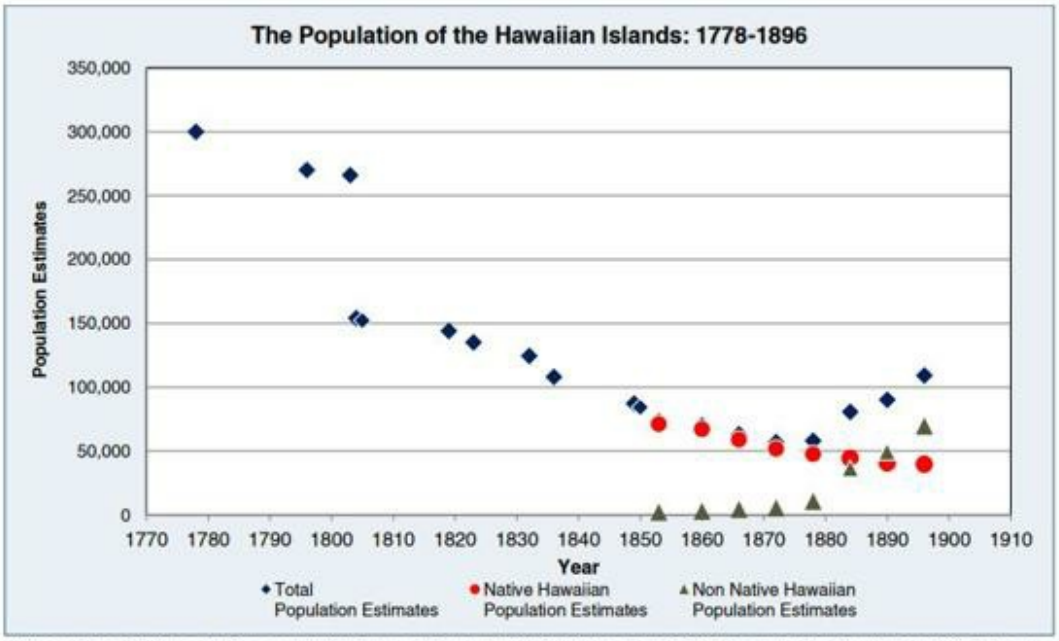
In 1844, the Old Sugar Mill closed down. But nevertheless, sugar plantations became an important part of Hawaii's economy during this decade. There was a ton of money to be made if you were able to grow and sell it, and over the century, sugar became one of the most valuable resources on a global scale. However, there was a problem. Sugar was not easy to produce.

Sugarcane is incredibly intensive to grow and tends to tire out the ground it grows in, meaning you cannot just keep planting crops on the same piece of land over and over again. To keep up with demand, more access to land was needed. What is more, sugarcane requires a lot of manpower to grow, nurture, and harvest, especially with the absence of machines back in the day.

This made Hawaii a prime location for the sugar industry. There were thousands of square miles of natural, incredibly fertile land available to be used for such a purpose, and there was an entire labor force of natives if

necessary. These plantations established similar practices as the Old Sugar Mill, which kept the Native Hawaiians dependent on the sugar industry's growth.

The Native Hawaiian population numbers had been devastated due to the diseases brought to the islands, which means as the sugar industry continued to grow, foreigners came to the islands for opportunities, bringing more diseases. The demographics of the population were starting to change. Anglo-Americans were on the rise, although they never became the majority group. That honor belonged to Asians, who were imported or moved to the islands to work on sugarcane and pineapple plantations.



Source: Robert C. Schmitt. *Demographic Statistics of Hawaii: 1778-1965.* (Honolulu,1968). Robert C. Schmitt. *Historical Statistics of Hawaii.* (Honolulu,1977).

A graph of the population estimates of Hawaii.

Come the 1840s, sugar plantations practically dominated the Hawaiian agricultural landscape on every major island. Due to the introduction of steam-powered ships, shipping between the islands and importing and exporting products with other nations, namely the United States, became reliable and rapid. This was also fueled by the riches that were accumulated during the California gold rush, which was happening around this time period.

With businesses being heavily funded and the march of progress pretty much happening before many Native Hawaiians even knew what was happening, there was little they could do to stop what was happening. After all, this was

not something that the Hawaiians had faced before.

Even King Kamehameha III was unaware of the consequences. Of course, the missionaries and plantation owners were paying money to rent the land from Kamehameha III, but they were seeking ways to obtain these lands for themselves. And eventually, they would succeed.

The End of the Era

Although ancient Hawaii ended with the formation of the Kingdom of Hawaii, it is important to realize just how much life on the islands would change within only a century. As you can see, the old way of doing things was pretty much over, as Western ideals had begun to creep onto the islands.

From the 1840s onward, the sugar and pineapple industries boomed, and the land across the archipelago became increasingly disputed. That is not to say that the Native Hawaiians, specifically the monarchy, did not try to stop it. In an attempt to keep up with modern times, the *aliʻi*, which included the coveted Kamehameha bloodline, set up laws and processes to help Hawaiians take ownership of what was rightfully theirs.

For example, the Great Māhele introduced the concept of private property. However, Kamehameha wanted the Hawaiians to claim the land that was theirs. The land was divided into thirds, with one third going to the monarch, another third going to the *aliʻi*, and the final third going to the common people. However, many Hawaiians were confused by the concept. The land was already theirs; why would they need to make an official claim on it? Few common Hawaiians made claims. These lands were eventually put up for sale, and most of the land went to businesses from the United States. It is believed that these businesses owned around 32 percent of Hawaii's lands.

Little by little, piece by piece, through changes in the law and monarchy, the Americans were able to take away ownership of the land. In 1898, just at the turn of the 20th century, Hawaii was annexed by President William McKinley. Hawaii would become a state of the United States in 1959.

Of course, this is putting it very simply. There was a lot of controversy behind what happened with Hawaii's annexation, such as a rebellion against the monarchy led by the United States. There were protests and coups. Queen Liliʻuokalani (r. 1891–1893) and other *aliʻi* were arrested. The Kingdom of Hawaii was overthrown. If any of this interests you, we encourage you to read more about the history of Hawaii to gain a better understanding of what happened to the islands and how the Native Hawaiians are embracing their

culture today. But our journey of ancient Hawaii has come to an end.

Conclusion

With the annexation of Hawaii complete, the Hawaiian archipelago was officially changed forever. Under the guidance of the United States government, Hawaii kept pace with the rest of the modern world and is home to many of the same ways of life as the Western mainland.

To some, it is a shame that colonialism and industrial efforts took Hawaii and transformed it into yet another aspect of their way of life. As you can tell from its history, Hawaii's ancient history is one of interest and deserves to be studied.

The Polynesians once sailed thousands of miles to discover the islands of Hawaii, where they created a thriving civilization. They lived off the land and learned how to work together to create a society that lived in balance with nature. It was more efficient and progressive in some ways than other societies at the time.

Of course, that does not mean that Hawaii's history did not have its fair share of violence and bloodshed. It surely did, and there is no doubt that Hawaii was the battleground for some of the most legendary conflicts and revolutions in history, especially for such a condensed population.

Nevertheless, it is a history that will never be forgotten any time soon, and if you were to travel to Hawaii today, you would see endless references, memorials, landmarks, museums, statues, artwork, and dedications to their ancient way of life. Hawaii's history is celebrated and revered, not just by the Hawaiian people of today but also throughout the world.

Travel to any of the islands today, and you will still find remnants of the old world. Temple structures, sacred symbols, parks, and tributes are everywhere. There has been a resurgence of the traditional way of life in recent years, and the Native Hawaiian population is making a comeback, although their numbers are still much lower than they should be. Regardless, their history should never be forgotten.

We remember their faith in their gods and their deep-rooted rituals. We celebrate their master crafting skills and their resilience and dedication to maintaining their traditions. There should be little doubt in your mind that one of the most inspirational cultures to have ever lived was the Hawaiians. And their land and people uphold a legacy that will last forever.

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